

Richard Stoddard

W. Shirley

E L E C T R A,

A

T R A G E D Y;

AND THE

BIRTH OF HERCULES,

A

M A S Q U E.

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ELECTRA,

A

TRAGEDY.

BY

WILLIAM SHIRLEY.



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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
P H I L I P,
EARL of CHESTERFIELD,

Knight-Companion of the Most Noble Order of the GARTER.

My LORD,

WHEN the bill was depending in parliament for subjecting dramatic productions to a court-office for licence, your Lordship highly distinguished yourself in support of the independency of genius, animated thereto, as men have ever believed, by a patriotic regard for constitutional rights, a generous love of liberty, and a real affection for sublime arts, in which being born to excel, You naturally delighted to patronize and protect them.

Your Lordship wisely considered so entire a subjugation of dramatic genius as was then proposed, and indeed accomplished, to be an invasion of freedom, severe in its nature, and of dangerous example. You had likewise the penetration to foresee it might prove the source of real grievance: and how far that prediction has been hitherto verified, may perhaps be best discovered by a perusal of the following poem; which, however imperfect as a work of art, I trust must appear undeserving of any charge of licentiousness, as I can conscientiously declare myself innocent of any such intention.

DEDICATION.

tention. But having unfortunately suffered by that law which your Lordship's shining talents were so amiably exerted, though in vain, to oppose, I think my acknowledgements for such good intentions are indispensibly your due, as those ever will be of the professors and admirers of the first and most useful of the fine arts, and likewise of all true friends of our constitutional liberty.

It must be the task of historians to inform future ages, that your Lordship was successively honoured with the highest trusts of government, and in the most critical seasons; that You discharged all the duties of the most exalted stations with such abilities and integrity as obtained You the affection of your Sovereign, and universal approbation; that in the meridian of your glory, and with a full harvest of fame, you voluntarily quitted power for the enjoyments of retirement, and that your Lordship had therein the constant good wishes and veneration of mankind.

BUT it is my ambition, if this poor production should reach another age, to manifest to posterity the high sense I have of your Lordship's merits as a lover, protector and encourager of arts: fully sensible however, that this humble tribute of my gratitude and respect can do your Lordship no honour, for that is far beyond my power; my aim being rather to do myself the greatest, by thus publicly declaring how much I admire your distinguished worth, and that I am, with the utmost respect,

My LORD,

Your Lordship's

most obedient,

most devoted,

humble Servant,

WILLIAM SHIRLEY.

T O T H E
R E A D E R.

THE following Tragedy was began to be written in 1744, and finished early in the succeeding spring. No more than a very few friends had seen it before the rebellion of that year broke out; on the first tidings of which, the Author laid it aside, from an apprehension that the subject, which he had casually chosen, might be considered as invidious and offensive while the nation continued in so unhappy a situation.

BEING soon afterwards engaged in business abroad, he had no leisure for indulgence in poetical amusements; so that from his first laying the piece aside, to the middle of the year 1755, he does not recollect to have so much as once looked it over: but as in that year an end had been put to the business in which he was engaged, he did then devote some idle hours to the reading and re-touching of it: after doing which, he sent a copy thereof to a friend in ENGLAND, requesting it might be offered to Mr. Garrick for representation.

MR. Garrick said he was engaged to another Gentleman for the performance of a play on the same subject, though hitherto no such has appeared, and therefore he could only offer to exhibit this at a season of the year the Author did not think would be for the credit of him or his production to let it first appear in; and thereupon the piece was returned to his friend.

A Nobleman, then abroad, was so obliging, from the favourable opinion which he was pleased to entertain of the Tragedy, as to offer to shew it to the late Mr. Rich, which he accordingly did at the beginning of the following winter. But as that Manager is now dead, no more need be said than that the negotiation proved abortive.

ON the Author's arrival in England, which was in the following month of March, he received the piece from his noble friend, and applied in person to Mr. Rich, with whom the Play was again left for a considerable time, but at length received back by the Author in disgust.

No thoughts were entertained of farther applications to the Theatres, till from accidentally meeting Mr Beard in the summer of the year 1762, the Author availed himself of the slightest acquaintance

TO THE READER.

ance with that Gentleman, who had become the Manager of Covent-Garden Theatre, to desire his permission for waiting on him upon business; which was obligingly granted, upon Mr. Beard's returning from the country, to which he said he was then going.

IN the following month of August the Author called upon Mr. Beard with his Play, requesting his perusal and opinion of it: and being answered, it was feared the house was fully engaged for the approaching season, he replied, his desire was an opinion only of the piece, which, if approved, might be exhibited whenever convenient. Upon which Mr. Beard said, he never relied on his own judgment in such matters, but would thereon take the opinion of a friend, on whose knowledge and candour he entirely relied: which the Author told him was all he either wished or desired.

MR. Beard was then asked, if he did not intend paying a theatrical compliment on the birth of the Prince of WALES? because if he did, the Author submitted a subject to his consideration which he thought no unhappy one, and which, if approved, he might recommend to any writer for that purpose. To which Mr. Beard answered, that it was greatly their desire to pay such a compliment; but as he knew not whom to apply to for the poetical performance, he wished the Author would undertake the execution of it himself, who replied, he was going into the country, and would endeavour to oblige him.

THE Author accordingly went into the country, and was at a considerable distance from London when he first heard the preliminaries of peace were agreed on: upon which he threw into the annexed Masque all the oblique compliments on that measure of government which could be consistent with the general delicacy he had prescribed to himself in the execution of the work, which a chaste intention induced him to make in all points merely allusive.

THE Author returned to town towards the middle of September: when calling on Mr. Beard, to shew him what was written of the Masque, he became informed, without making the least enquiry, the opinion given of his Tragedy was so much in its favour, that the parts had been ordered to be written out, as preparative to its speedy representation. The Masque was soon afterwards finished, and Dr Arne engaged to set it to music, which he accordingly did with uncommon excellence, as the Author has been informed by many judges of music.

AT the end of November, Mr. Beard appointed a day for reading the Tragedy at the Theatre; after which it was immediatly put into rehearsal, and copies of the Play and Masque were sent to the office,

TO THE READER.

office, in order to their being licensed. The day was fixt early in January for exhibiting the Tragedy, and preparations were likewise making for the performance of the Masque, when a licence for the latter was sent down to the Theatre, and at the same time notice of a refusal thereof to the former, to the very great surprize of all persons who had ever seen it.

THE Author thereon, by the advice of his friends, represented, in a respectful memorial to the Lord-Chamberlain, the great misfortune to him which he considered the refusal of the licence to be; that the Play had been written near twenty years, and was no other than the *ELECTRA* of *SOPHOCLES*, adapted to the English stage; that he had never apprehended it could possibly give offence, nor had any one, who heard it either read or rehearsed, ever suggested to him a thought that it could in any point prove exceptionable; so that, innocent as he was both in act and intention, he became thereby exposed to suffer in reputation as well as property, unless relief should be granted him. But the humble representation of truth, which he so made, unhappily failed of procuring him redress.

THE Masque was afterwards put into rehearsal: but the Author never heard any other reason assigned for its not being represented than, that the promise which at that time had been forced from the managers with some violence by the town, of not refusing half-prices to any representations except new Pantomimes, had made it not worth their while to be at great expences for other kinds of exhibitions; in which reasons he silently acquiesced, from thinking he had no right to interpose farther concerning a performance which, as far as regarded its representation, he had made a present of to the house.

WHEN a considerable length of time had convinced him his memorial was not likely to procure him any kind of redress, at the importunities of his friends, he became determined to publish the Tragedy, for the satisfaction of the public, and in vindication of himself; the advertisements for which purpose were accordingly drawn up, and in the Bookseller's hands: but farther proceedings were then stopt, on there happening a sudden change in the Administration, which made him resolve to suspend the publication till the effects should be seen of a new application; but that he did not however make till the spring of the last year, having had some little encouragement given him to hope for personal intervention: but being disappointed therein, he applied, by another memorial, of the same tenor as the former one, to the present Lord-Chamberlain; which likewise failing to remove the impediment to the exhibition of his piece in the season which is now

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ending,

TO THE READER.

ending, nothing farther could remain for him to do, but to submit it, in his own justification, to the judgement of the public, by means of the press; which he accordingly now does, in the manner that has invariably been the custom on all such occasions.

FROM this plain and faithful narrative of what has past relative to these productions, the Author flatters himself with believing it must satisfactorily appear, that his Tragedy was at first written without the least evil design; that, soon after finishing it, he laid it by for a while on a good one, which was to avoid giving offence; that it has not been his fault there was not an exhibition of it many years ago; that the time it was to have appeared in was a matter of mere accident, and that any malignant intention could not therein be imputable to him, as he was at the same time actually manifesting all due loyalty to his Sovereign and respect to his Government, by the double temporary compliment which he voluntarily meant to pay in the *Malque*.

He likewise declares, that with regard to conduct, characters and sentiments, the piece now appears exactly as it was first written; there having been no alterations made in it, except by meer touches of the language, and in the addition of a very few lines to the first scene, for the sake of opening a principal character to the audience, which was done eight years ago, at the instance of the late Mr. Rich. He avers with equal truth, that had a desire been but hinted to him of suspending the representation of his play, a compliance on his part would most readily have taken place. But why the representation was prohibited, he is not enabled to inform his readers; for upon application to know the cause, the answer he received was, that the office never assigned reasons for refusing the licence. He does not however allow himself to comment on the nature of such power, or any methods of executing it.

He thinks he owes to himself the farther justice of declaring, that he has ever held in high abhorrence any prostitution of the stage to the serving of unworthy purposes, and every cause of deviation from the wise ends of its institution; which were, by the refinements and excellencies of art, to render such pleasures highly profitable, from their aptitude insensibly to polish the manners and improve the morals of the people. In which comprehensive and just light Mr. Addison must have contemplated this most useful species of poetry, when he considered *a perfect Tragedy to be the noblest production of human nature*. But that amiable writer, when he mentioned perfection, could only mean it as comparative, because absolute perfection is not
to

TO THE READER.

to be sought for in human productions; and the Author of *Electra* makes no pretension to higher merit than that of good intention. His single view in furnishing this authority is to do real justice to an excellent art, which he ever admired; but, with equal concern and indignation, has heard too often depreciated, at least with respect to living Authors, however honoured in the dead.

WHILE he asserts entire innocence, he avoids expatiating on injury, either with regard to the public or himself. The world may probably suffer no loss from his absolute discouragement to prosecute such studies any farther. Yet it may be worthy of observation, that the breath of such absolute power as blights the meanest genius, may also blast the greatest. It is, therefore, without farther intention than to apprise the world of such effects, he thinks it behoves him to say, that notwithstanding Mr. Beard had been made to think very favourably of this Tragedy, yet after the licence had been refused to it, he would not, at a considerable distance of time, give the Author the least encouragement to put the last hand to another, which had been written much longer, on a Grecian story, and in which nothing whatever could appear exceptionable to power. But, in saying this, he means no kind of reflection on the conduct of that Gentleman; who probably considered him as an unfortunate man, from the rejection he had encountered, and which he might interpret as a caution to himself with regard to future proceedings. May it likewise prove a conscientious caution to those entrusted with such unlimited power, how they exercise it hereafter, lest injuries are thereby heedlessly extended far beyond any means of compensation they can possibly apply.

THE PERSONS REPRESENTED.

ORESTES.

PYLADES.

ÆGYSTHUS.

MELISANDER.

ARCAS.

ÆTHON.

LYCON.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

ELECTRA.

NOBLES, OFFICERS, ATTENDANTS, and GUARDS.

SCENE MYCENÆ.

E L E C T R A.
A T R A G E D Y.

A C T THE FIRST.

SCENE THE FIRST.

SCENE *a grand room in the palace.*

ARCAS discovered leaning on the pedestal of a pillar.

ÆTHON enters to him.

ÆTHON.

ARCAS!—what, musing?—On thy bended brow
Anguish and care seem seated!—Painful guests.
Say, kind and venerable friend, whose love
Supplied a father's part, untimely lost,
To form my mind, and fashion it to greatness;
Say if a man on earth has dar'd to wrong thee?
And here's a sword and arm for thy revenge.

ARCAS.

Æthon, I thank thee. Be that sword and arm
By the good Gods preserv'd for better service.

Son of the man whom most on earth I lov'd,
Heir of his virtues, and to my affection,

B

Mingle

Mingle thy social tears—the cause is common.
 I weep the various wrongs, the countless woes,
 Pour'd by the hand of him whom angry Jove,
 For our offences, in his rage hath sent
 To plague the realms and race of Agamemnon.

ÆTHON.

You mean that baleful monster, black Ægyſthus:
 Whom Agamemnon, when he led to Troy,
 In glorious league, confederated Kings,
 Nam'd with his Queen, his lovely Clytemneſtra,
 Joint-ſubſtitute in delegated ſway:
 O fatal choice! from whence temptation roſe
 T'abuse a monarch's truſt, defile his bed,
 And from his murder mount his ſacred throne.

A R C A S.

Such were indeed the ſteps by which he reach'd
 That violated ſeat, the guardian once,
 And nurſe of ev'ry virtue. Now the ſource
 Of hard oppreſſions and unceaſing wrongs.
 But will ye, Gods! continue to behold
 Unpity'd, unredreſs'd, our royal Orphan?
 See the griev'd people of two kingdoms bend
 Beneath a tyrant's ſcourge? Authority
 Defil'd by guilt? and ſtreams of tears and blood,
 Sluic'd from barbarity, or drain'd for ſport,
 By one who knows no feelings of a man?
 Who wanting ev'ry virtue to endear him,
 On terror would eſtabliſh uſurpation.

ÆTHON.

ELECTRA

ÆTHON.

Unhappy lot of Argos and Mycenæ: —
But theirs supremely whose exalted rank
Superior woes distinguish.—Oh! my friend,
To what were Agamemnon's offspring born!

ARCAS.

True! 'tis a theme on which reflection wrings
The heart of pity. From all converse, light
And comfort sever'd, in a dungeon's depth,
Electra wails a murder'd father's fate,
A hapless brother's exile; driv'n from home
The succour of compassion to implore,
And ask of Kings, the equals of his birth,
Shelter and food—the fordid beggar's boon.

ÆTHON.

Thrice has Electra suffer'd such hard durance,
From the keen malice of his jealous guilt
Who construes sorrows crimes, and silence treason.

ARCAS.

Well might the groans of her impatient grief
Untimely issue: well provoke his ire
Whose stinging conscience startles at reproach.
To minds that fly rememb'rance—fear remorse—
To guilt—the tears of innocence are galling:
She fears no enemy like that within,
Nor contemplation like her own dark deeds.

ÆTHON.

What then, my friend, must Clytemnestra feel?

Seduc'd to frailties which impell'd her on
To crimes of dire necessity?

ARCAS.

What, Æthon?—

Why all that thro' the close disguise of art,
Of female vanity and regal pride,
The eye of penetration sees her suffer.
Else, 'midst the revels of voluptuous pomp,
Why is she thoughtful?—silent?—Whence the sigh
Which oft involuntary heaves her breast?
Whence her lone wand'rings in sequester'd shades,
Her downcast musings, and her tear-swol'n eyes,
But from the terrors of a soul dismay'd?
Tormented by internal stings, while aw'd
By her deluder once—her tyrant now.

ÆTHON.

To what bewild'ring ills does error lead!—
But turn we from the regions of despair,
To the sweet mansion of alluring hope.
Say, my good Arcas, from the court of Phocis,
Where now our royal fugitive resides,
When gain'd you tidings?—At Mycenæ's gates,
When shall we greet deliv'rance with our King?

ARCAS.

The moon her vary'd course hath travell'd thro',
And in a second blunts her silver horns,
Since to my hands a trusty messenger
Brought letters from my friend, good Melifander,

The

The guide and guardian of his Monarch's flight ;
 Advising royal Strophius was preparing,
 With succours worthy of so great a cause,
 To send our blooming hero to assert
 His sov'reign rights.—But no Orestes yet—

ÆTHON.

Soft!—for the minion of Ægythus comes :
 The catiff Lycon. He whose guile is task'd
 To sharpen persecution, and delight,
 By ev'ry outrage, a licentious monster.

SCENE THE SECOND.

ARCAS, ÆTHON, and LYCON.

LYCON.

Hail, noble Argians! With a friendly greeting,
 I give ye tidings will, I know, be welcome.
 Oft have I heard ye, humbled to the Gods,
 With tears invoke 'em in Electra's cause ;
 While to your supplications mine were added,
 That heav'n would persecute no more the race
 Of royal Agamemnon ; but restore
 To light, to liberty, to ev'ry comfort,
 That suff'ring Princess, whose transcendant charms
 And matchless virtues raise our equal wonder!
 At length relenting destiny accords,
 For regal mercy has announc'd her freedom.

ARCAS.

ELECTRA.

ARCAS.

How, Lycon, free!—Said'st thou Electra's free?—
 Speak it again—nor in my gladden'd heart
 Leave gloomy doubt a corner to possess.

LYCON.

Indulge such wish'd—such well-encounter'd joy—
 Electra has her freedom.

ARCAS.

Gracious Pow'rs!
 I weep my thanks.

ÆTHON.

Say on—the cause, good Lycon?

LYCON.

Some minutes past, while absent from the city,
 The King, on rural altars, to their Gods,
 Guardians of fleecy flocks and grazing herds,
 Pays in rich sacrifice his yearly tribute,
 A posting stranger to the palace came
 With letters he proclaim'd of high import,
 Demanding quick admittance to the throne.
 The Queen receiv'd him: and no sooner read
 Th' imparted tidings, than a sudden flame
 Blaz'd on her cheek; which in an instant chang'd
 To livid paleness—from averted eyes
 While tears stole silent.—But regaining soon
 The firmness of her mind, diffusive smiles
 Brighten'd her form, and beam'd delight around her!

ARCAS.

Know you not what those letters might reveal?
 Or from whose hand the messenger received them?

LYCON.

ELECTRA.

7

LYCON.

Neither. I, on the instant, was commanded
To hasten to the King, and urge his coming
To meet intelligence so fraught with joy
As will reward his swiftest speed to hear.
Then, as I parted, loud I heard her cry,
Release Electra—set the Princess free.
More know I not. And now, by duty urg'd,
Like Maia's winged son, when from the throne
Of Jove supreme he bears divine behests
To kindred deities, I fly to greet
Their sacred substitute, the Lord of Argos.

SCENE THE THIRD:

ARCAS and ÆTHON.

ARCAS.

Hear ye such blasphemies, immortal Gods!
And yet with-hold your thunders? But a bolt
Has riven me!—I shudder to reflect
Amidst what snares, what perils, we proceed.

O, Æthon! what anxieties intrude
While daring enterprize is on the wing,
And dubious the decree of awful fate!

A royal Orphan's rights, a nation's rescue,
A tyrant's overthrow, a King's revenge,
Press to decision—on an hour depend.

All-trembling as I ponder the event,

At

At each alarm, my watchful genius starts,
Like centinels in cities close besieg'd,
Where momentary ruin threatens round.

ÆTHON.

Should our design miscarry, and Ægythus,
Deep-vers'd in all the politician's wiles,
Trace thro' the mazes of our loyal scheme,
Its bold abettors out—what will ensue?
What means of torture will he not devise?
How wanton in inflicted miseries!
How weary his invention to be cruel!

But be such phantom terrors far away.
Our league is form'd of men who dare to suffer—
At least for me—bear witness ev'ry God!
And light'nings blast me if my tongue dissembles—
Should the great purpose of our souls be lost,
It is my wish to perish with my hopes.

SARCA S.

O worthy wish!—Believe experienc'd age,
One who has journey'd thro' the wilds of life,
Now, at his ev'ning, on the verge of rest,
And happy that his course is near an end—
Of all the blessings here pursu'd by man,
You'll find one only permanent and great,
The solace of a just and steadfast heart.
Be master but of that, and soon you'll learn
To set the rage of tyrants at defiance.
Truth is a buckler of most sure defence,

And

And honour mightier than the arm of pow'r.
 Possess'd of those, you'll wage successful war,
 Be vanquisher of woes, and lord of death.
 Disgrace may seize, and persecution strike,
 But vainly both while conscience is unhurt,
 Tho' wrong'd, assaulted, ruin'd, trampled—crush'd,
 Till the last hope of human aid expires,
 Ev'n then the soul of probity directs
 A steady look to thrones of kindred Gods!
 And on unerring justice rests resign'd.

ÆTHON.

Behold an instance of such suff'ring virtue—
 Electra! Whose high dignity of spirit,
 More than the strong resemblance of her features,
 Speaks her the daughter of great Agamemnon.

SCENE THE FOURTH.

ARCAS, ÆTHON and ELECTRA.

ELECTRA.

Source of all light, celestial Phœbus, hail!—
 The common comfort of whose kindly beams,
 That glad the toiling hind—and cheer the slave,
 Hath to a wretched Princess been deny'd.

At length, I breathe in wholesome air again:
 My groans have larger scope—my tears can stream,
 And leave me yet a corner where to lye,
 Unwet with trickling anguish. To these walls,

C

Whose

Whose ornamental pride my father gave,
 And which beheld him butcher'd in their bounds,
 I now may tell my plaintive tale of woes;
 Ring on their vaulted roofs resounding cries!
 And let amusement watch the bandy'd breath,
 To melt at echo'd miseries in tears.

A R C A S.

Much-injur'd Princess, more than feeble words,
 These falling drops express your servant's joy
 For your implor'd deliv'rance.

ELECTRA.

Gentle friend,
 The friend of Agamemnon's injur'd house—
 What, Æthon too? and melting to behold me!
 This mournful comfort hath affliction then,
 I am not wretched to the last extreme;
 Since fell oppression leaves one gen'rous pair
 To mingle sorrows with a child of grief.

ÆTHON.

Sorrow is fruitless. Vengeance better suits
 A cause like yours—the cause of all mankind.

ELECTRA.

Where is my brother? Does Orestes come,
 Like hea'vn's high delegate, a righteous Monarch,
 To call offenders to severe account?
 Hears he the cries his suffering subjects raise,
 And, like a parent, yearns for their deliv'rance?
 The call of nature—is he deaf to that?

Or

ELECTRA.

II

Or comes he, with his falchion flaming high,
To strike for vengeance; and, in pious rage,
With an assassin's, a usurper's blood,
To make oblation to his father's ghost?

ARCAS.

The womb of fate, in folds impenetrable,
Securely still that long'd-for secret wraps.
Warm are our wishes, but the hop'd event
Is in the hand of heav'n.

ELECTRA.

But does he come—
O ease my wild impatience! Does he come
Like happy tidings to the pining heart,
Like welcome day-light to the frozen pole,
A wish'd reliever? Are his subjects tongues
Eager to hail him King? and all their swords
To aid his cause, and seat him on his throne?

ARCAS.

We hope he comes. His last dispatches told
We might expect him ere the present hour.
And here ten thousand hearts, with fierce impatience,
Pant to avow and vindicate his claim.

ELECTRA.

O wherefore loiters then th' unthrifty boy?
Had he the spirit that inflames my breast,
'Twould lend his purpose wings. Alas, my friends,
Less than a sister does the out-cast son
Of Agamemnon feel a father's wrongs,

Lefs feels his own, and hers who suffers for him.
 Else had my prison-bars ere this been broke,
 And his vex'd people rescu'd from oppression;
 While signal justice to the world had shewn,
 That Heav'n is active in behalf of Kings:
 That royal hardships claim severe account,
 And murder'd Majesty will have revenge.

Æ T H O N.

All these he doubtless meditates with caution:
 But slow the progress is of deep designs.

E L E C T R A.

Had I been slow and cautious when the swords
 Of Regicides, yet reeking with the blood
 Of Agamemnon, with a father's blood,
 Were ev'n uplifted, by determin'd arms,
 To make a second sacrifice of his,
 He instant had partook that father's fate.
 No, 'midst my grief, my horror, my distraction!
 I paus'd not, stopt not to secure his flight,
 But seiz'd the first, the only lucky minute
 That fate allow'd to snatch him from destruction;
 Which, had I miss'd, could ne'er have been retriev'd.
 O why delays he? Wherefore lingers thus?
 Urge, gracious Gods! his haste, and save his honour,
 Ere busy tongues proclaim such caution fear.

A R C A S.

The sacred root from whence our scion sprung
 Hereditary valour so renowns,

That

That slander's self must blush to aim the brand.
 Nor are the virtues of the Prince unknown.
 Fame has already cheer'd our expectation
 With ev'ry promise of a god-like mind.
 Then fear not, Princess, all will yet go well.

Have you not mark'd the gath'ring of a storm,
 When rousing clouds and ghastly gleams of light,
 In fearful mixture and distemper'd motion,
 Shew'd as distorted nature writh'd with pain,
 Ere Jove's accumulated thunders burst
 With flames and clamours, that appear'd to rend
 The concave firmament from side to side?

Dreadful discharge of heav'nly indignation!
 And terrible the prelude! So Orestes
 Will end, I trust, our agonizing pause
 Of expectation, fear, impatience, hope,
 Ev'ry anxiety that wrings our souls
 From this delay; which doubtless he improves
 To sharpen vengeance to a keener edge,
 Add to its force, and give it double fury.

ELECTRA.

Buoy'd by that hope, I struggle with the stream
 Of rushing injuries, of raging woes—
 Nor sink the victim of o'erwhelming anguish.

ÆTHON.

The Queen approaches!—

ELECTRA

Aid me, Resolution.

SCENE

SCENE THE FIFTH.

ELECTRA and CLYTEMNESTRA.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Electra, is my earnest wish accomplish'd,
 That chastisement, unwillingly inflicted,
 Bows to obedience thy too-stubborn spirit?
 Maternal fondness, ever pow'rful here,
 Still prompts endeavour to promote thy bliss:
 While, in severe return, a fullen gloom
 Unceasing clouds thy brow; and from thy tongue
 Break taunts invenom'd, daring menaces,
 To all provoking—and to thee unsafe.

ELECTRA.

Could aught efface the sad rememb'rance here
 Of injuries unequall'd, in the fate
 My god-like father, Agamemnon, met,
 Disgrac'd in dust, and bleeding on the floor,
 The victim of their guilt who most had wrong'd him;
 Could I forget but that, all other ills
 I'd watch a lonely minute to lament,
 And wear a smile forever in your sight.
 But as it is, my tears, as would the blood
 From my poor father's mangled body, stream
 Whene'er his ruthless murderers approach.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Perverse and arrogant!—Have I no claim?
 Is nothing due, no portion of regard,

To

To her who gave thee life—who train'd thy youth—
 Has fought thy love—and suffer'd from thy rashness?
 As mutual parent, sure the claim is mine,
 From nature's fixt, irrevokable law,
 To the same rev'rence that you owe a father.

ELECTRA.

Such claims were cancel'd all, when you devis'd
 The ruin of my happiness and hopes.
 A father's fondness and protection lost,
 Were half my stock: and that by you I lost 'em,
 Is a reflection that destroys the rest.

Since of Electra, then, her mother made
 This slave of misery, this finish'd wretch,
 O do not grudge her griefs, who only lives
 To weep a father's fate, and wish her own.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

With such reproaches, will you dare inflame
 A mother's anger, and a Queen's resentment?
 Was not that father, whom my vengeance flew,
 A tyrant stain'd with ev'ry human guilt?
 I had a daughter, dutiful as dear,
 Lovely alike in features and of soul!
 Who butcher'd her? and, oh! on what account?—
 The poor pretence to purchase winds at Aulis,
 To wing their vessels for devoted Troy.

And what ensu'd?—I fought not, nor could shun
 The tales which with amazement fill'd the world,
 Of rapes and riots that embroil'd their camp!

Till,

Till, to compleat his insults, on return,
 He brav'd me with his phrygian paramour,
 The ten year's earning of his hostile sword,
 His wanton, his Cassandra!—Then I struck
 For injur'd love, insulted dignity,
 And freed myself at once from wrongs and shame.

ELECTRA.

Had Clytemnestra fear'd no other wrongs
 Than those her lord from ruin'd Ilium brought,
 Great Agamemnon had not timeless bled,
 Nor Priam's spotless daughter stood accus'd.
 O there were inmates fiercer than resentment
 To counsel such a desp'rate, dreadful deed!
 Guilt, conscious guilt! with all her hideous train,
 As skulking shame, and ghastly apprehension;
 The awe of justice, dread of punishment,
 And ev'ry demon of distemper'd minds.
 These with the wretch—but let me hide the rest,
 Nor picture what distracts me to remember.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

'Twas blood for blood: he shed my daughter's blood.
 For wrongs on wrongs to me, he justly fell

ELECTRA.

That law admitted, where's the guilt to end?
 If murder claims a sacrifice in kind,
 It now is Clytemnestra's turn to bleed.

Was Iphigenia's fate, for Greece devoted,
 A glorious victim! made the bad pretence

To

To slay her father? rob of sov'reign rights
 An orphan brother? and condemn to bonds
 A helpless sister?—O prepost'rous plea!
 Could even phrenzy prompt so dire a thought,
 As that a mother, in outrageous grief,
 Might for the fate of one devote the rest,
 Husband and children; and to crown the deed,
 Grace with their spoils, and wed their mortal foe?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Too stabbing truths!—how keen to gall'd remembrance!—

[*Aside.*]

Licentious railer—will nor decency,
 Nor apprehension rein thy ranc'rous tongue?—
 Then let me warn thee—trespass thus no farther,
 Lest in th' offended queen the mother's lost.
 Too long I've borne thy insults.—Henceforth know,
 'Tis my resolve, with rigour to exact
 The dues of dignity and rights of nature.
 Cease provocation then, or, by my wrongs,
 I yield thee to the vengeance of the king.

ELECTRA.

The king!—the traitor, regicide—usurper!
 I dare his malice—for I dare to die.
 Let those be tame whose souls, defil'd with guilt,
 May justly dread a terrible hereafter.

I know no fear. My hands were never stain'd
 By sceptres torn from a defenceless child,
 Or with a monarch's, or a husband's blood!
 O Gods! my griefs transport me! Tell the tyrant,

D

I scorn

I scorn his indignation—dare his fury—
 Hate him—nor fear to let my death enhance
 The great account, which soon my brother's sword
 Shall in a storm of vengeance well acquit.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

To thy confusion, menacer, be told,
 Those threats are vain—that brother is no more.

A posting phocian has reveal'd the tidings,
 With royal greetings from his aged king,
 Who sends, in-urn'd, the ashes of Orestes,
 To rest with his progenitors forever.

ELECTRA.

Relieve me, Gods! in mercy, oh! relieve me!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What now are all thy empty vaunts of vengeance?
 Thy fancy'd triumph, a frail, airy vision,
 Fades like the tincture of an ev'ning cloud,
 Whose dazzling figure, bright as burnish'd gold,
 This moment blazes, and the next is lost.

ELECTRA.

O pow'rless anguish—impotence of torture!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Mark what imports thee much. Thy impious wishes,
 Thou se'st are blasted all; thy hopes cut off;
 And thou thyself, defenceless, in the pow'r
 Of those thou'st dar'd to injure and provoke.

Yet—for I feel a tenderness within me
 Which, spight of thy ingratitude, still pleads,

And

And struggles with resentment—yet be safe.
 Enjoy thy freedom:—but, I warn thee, use it
 With all the caution that becomes thy state,
 To me respectful, to the king obedient.

This last fond effort that affection makes,
 Should rashness render vain, all earth and heav'n
 Must sure absolve me, if I give thee up,
 The victim of insulted sov'reign-pow'r.

SCENE THE SIXTH.

ELECTRA, ARCAS and ÆTHON.

ELECTRA.

Then all my dreams of happiness resolve
 In disappointment, and substantial woe!

O gentle friends! the meteor hope, that play'd
 In fancy's airy region, now has spent
 Its pleasing fires—and all is void and cheerless.
 Comfort is vanish'd—peace for ever fled——
 All that was worth a wish, ourselves, our country,
 Perish with poor Orestes.

ÆTHON.

Hah! Orestes?

ELECTRA.

Oh! he is gone for ever.

ARCAS.

Then these eyes
 Last to behold the day, when nothing's left
 To stir an old man's pulse—or wake one care.

D 2

ELECTRA.

Wretched and hopeless since we're thus become,
 Let us unite our miseries together :
 Swell up the load with ev'ry added grief,
 Till its own pressures crush all feeling out,
 And gasping nature groans sad being off.

I have no duties now for life remaining,
 But, when they come, to clasp my brother's ashes,
 Perform the solemn, sad sepulchral rites,
 And sacrifice to the infernal Gods
 For his departed soul. Be those accomplish'd,
 And death shall be my deity. I'll pray
 The meagre pow'r to take to his embrace
 The last of Agamemnon's hapless race.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

 ACT THE SECOND.

SCENE THE FIRST.

SCENE *a royal apartment with a throne.*

Enter CLYTEMNESTRA, attended.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

LEAVE me*—and let me quit the hard restraint
 Of counterfeit appearance—nor obstruct

[*Ex. Attendants.*]

Nature's impetuous impulse. Painful probes
 Of searching thought, what tortures do ye cause!
 My wrong'd, abandon'd, ruin'd, lifeless child!
 Conscience convicts me, as the baneful source,
 Of all thy suff'rings—death! Pride, indignation!
 Ye daring counsellors, but dastard champions,
 How fell your instigations—false your smiles!

Weak vanity of hope, from evil deeds
 To gather blifs. Still vainer the endeavour,
 With doubling anguish—anguish to disguise.
 What boots it wretchedness the world should think
 We are what we but seem?—O Agamemnon!
 Orestes! how much happier are the wrong'd
 Than those who injure!—Sweet were all my hours

While

While virtue led their course. But guilt's dominion
 Perplexes, harrasses, distracts — confounds !
 Fly, mortals, timely the seducer vice —
 When once enthral'd, ye plunge from crime to crime,
 Disabled for resistance.* — Hah ! — Ægysthus ! [* *Shouting.*
 The cause and scourge of all my foul offences.

SCENE THE SECOND.

CLYTEMNESTRA, ÆGYSTHUS, and LYCON.

ÆGYSTHUS.

[*Shouting without.*]

Repeat your acclamations, till the skies
 Resound with clam'rous echos ! O my Lycon !
 How kindles rapture from this blaze of joy !
 Fan the aspiring flame — exalt my blifs —
 Augment these heart-felt triumphs. Hah ! my queen —
 Whence that thy eyes avoid encount'ring mine ?
 By the strong transports struggling here for vent,
 Those heaving sighs and stealing tears betray
 Disloyal love for Agamemnon's race.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

'Tis my misfortune, if within this breast
 Such jarring ties and warring passions meet
 As to distraction agonize my soul.
 The duties of a wife I own and practise —
 But can't divest me of a mother's feelings.

ÆGYSTHUS.

Such feeling's frailty, folly ! more — 'tis guilt ;
 It marrs my happiness, by rude intrusion

Upon

Upon the hour to festive joy devoted.
 Learn, if thou'dst hold thy int'rest in my heart,
 The foremost virtue for a wife to practice,
 And make my will the leader of thy own.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Hear him, ye Gods! to whose celestial thrones
 His vows of gentleness were once address'd,
 Hear him reproach me for the tender tears
 His own severities and crimes provoke!

Can I resist the all-subduing strokes
 Of pow'rful nature, knocking at my heart?
 Can I—thou hard exacter of obedience——
 The hours I must remember, when thy tongue
 Was taught to sooth me with the softest strains.
 The sweets of Hybla honey'd o'er thy words,
 While I was won from innocence and bliss
 With feign'd observance and obsequious vows:
 But like a transient dream dominion past,
 And I awoke to suffer and to serve.

ÆGYSTHUS.

'Tis the ungovern'd vanity of woman,
 Fond of authority and proud of rule,
 Which tasks our tongues to vile dissimulation:
 Your wayward humours are your worst deluders,
 By which you're counsel'd, and by which deceiv'd.
 Prerogative, the gift of Gods to man,
 When madly you invade, and grieve to miss,

To

To error give the gall of disappointment,
Nor blame the husband who asserts his right.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Enjoy such pow'r, and exercise, unenvy'd,
Your lordly, high preheminance. But why
Must rooted passions, all the tender strings
That touch and harmonize the soul be broke?
Why am I grudg'd the privilege to breathe
A mournful sigh for an unhappy son,
Who owes his wrongs, his wretchedness — his death,
To my misdoings? Ev'ry savage brute —
The pard and lions that scour the desert
Protect and feed their offspring. On the cliff,
The parent-pelican, in want of food,
Relieves her young ones from her spouting veins!
While I, more fell than nature's commoners,
Gave up my helpless unoffending child
To ev'ry want and woe! And now am told,
That ev'n a tear descending on his grave
Is in a mother guilt! — What would'st thou, tyrant?
I cannot harden at thy will to stone.

ÆGYSTHUS,

I would have pleasure seen, and sparkling joy,
Now while the public eye is sharply pointed,
Observant of all looks: Such qualms as these
Intrude untimely, and may keep alive
The dying embers of sedition — serve
To sap allegiance ev'n in loyal hearts.

Then

Then give me smiles:—and if they can't be real,
Exert thy sex's ready art, dissembling,
To vamp thy visage with a feign'd delight.

C L Y T E M N E S T R A.

I long have labour'd to deceive myself,
As well as cheat the prying eyes of others:
Have steel'd my heart against a daughter's tears,
And link'd obedience with a guilty pride
To glory in the deeds my soul condemn'd.
But such endeavours all have turn'd against me,
And will, while in my bosom there's a judge
Whom no delusions can amuse or blind.
Conscience presents the mirror to my sight
That shews my crimes in such a hideous glare
As pains reflexion! But the curse redoubles
With bowing nature to the hard constraint
Of forcing smiles, and counterfeiting gladness.

Æ G Y S T H U S.

Of all the phantoms that infest the mind,
There's none so fatal as a frail remorse.
The soul that's staunch repels its worst assaults,
But fools and women fight to be o'ercome.
Yet timely learn precaution, lest I'm urg'd
To think, for my security and peace,
The course of slaughter once was stopt too soon.

C L Y T E M N E S T R A.

If loss of life were all I had to fear,
I'd wish that fury to be rous'd again.

E

But

But what must follow? There my guilt appalls me!
 When at the bar of Minos I appear,
 A slaughter'd husband—an abandon'd son,
 Will witness 'gainst me to my soul's undoing.
 Can fraud or artifice avail me there,
 Where all dissimulation must be vain?
 No—while for crimes reveal'd, just sentence issues,
 The shudd'ring shades will hiss, the furies yell!
 And lash me with relentless stripes for ever.

ÆGYSTHUS.

Then since I'm master of the fate you fear,
 As love and duty both have lost their influence,
 On that foundation I'll erect my pow'r.

Mark my commands; you know my doom decisive,
 My will immoveable—my heart relentless.
 Hence—and prepare to greet this embassy
 As may become the consort of Ægistus,
 Or, by the majesty of mighty kings,
 My indignation shall dismiss thy soul
 To that tremendous trial.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Righteous Gods!

What curses spring from guilt!—But crimes like mine
 Demand ev'n this, to manifest your justice.

SCENE

SCENE THE THIRD.

ÆGYSTHUS and LYCON.

ÆGYSTHUS.

Now, Lycon, to fruition ripens hope,
 Alike my vengeance and ambition triumph.
 'Twas thou, my friend, and I must bless thy zeal,
 Who fir'd me first to all I have atchiev'd.
 Why should I gall remembrance with the motives?
 A progeny destroy'd—a parent fed
 With his own murder'd offspring! O Thyestes!
 Well might the radiant ruler of the day,
 Struck with a sight so horrid, turn his steeds,
 And back again, adown the slope of heav'n,
 Muffled in darkness, hurry from the fight!
 I only 'scap'd of my devoted house—
 So Jove decree'd, to be his instrument
 Of retribution on the race of Atreus.

Was it not precious havoc? Warm with conquest—
 His hopes accomplish'd, and his heart at ease—
 A king and hero—round his glitt'ring crown
 The laurel twining—so to send the soul
 Of Agamemnon to the shades beneath,
 To wander there a discontented ghost,
 Was worthy hazard—'twas divine revenge!

LYCON.

Regaining thus your right, Mycenæ's crown,
 And, from their own example, adding theirs,

The diadem of Argos, nobly rais'd
A doubly triumph on their desolation.

ÆGYSTHUS.

But thy good service unrewarded yet
With aught but grateful thoughts and kind regard,
Reproaches, Lycon, thy too thankless master.
Look round thee then, for all can charm thy wish—
I lay my pow'r, my pomp, my wealth before thee—
As of a father ask, whose ready hand
Would deal unceasing bounties to a son,
The darling of his bosom—Speak, my Lycon.

LYCON.

The conscious sense of having done my duty
Is full reward. Untainted by ambition,
And well-convinc'd that virtue pays herself,
I fought no higher solace.—Yet—

ÆGYSTHUS.

Say on—

Nor wrong my friendship by unkind reserve.

LYCON.

I dare not.

ÆGYSTHUS.

By the Gods! thou shalt—

'Tis my command. Whatever is thy wish,

I call the sacred host of heav'n to witness,

Ev'n to my kingdom's half, it shall be thine.

LYCON.

Let me entreat you urge this theme no farther:

ÆGYSTHUS.

ELECTRA.

29

ÆGYSTHUS.

Can'st thou, the only faithful, gen'rous friend
Dominion gave a monarch—can'st thou ask
A boon that I shall hesitate to grant?
No—speak, and make we happy in bestowing.

LYCON.

That I should hope what were a prize for kings,
And own I love so much above my rank
As Agamemnon's daughter—were presumption
Too great for me to hazard—you to pardon.

ÆGYSTHUS.

Bid Æthon instant bring the princess hither.

[LYCON goes out.]

By all the joys of friendship, long I've mark'd
Love's fond effects—still wond'ring to behold
Regard I judg'd too partial, ne'er suspecting
The tender motive.—Well was it for her
She had an advocate so near my heart.
Oft when the scope of her impetuous temper
Had wing'd resentment half to desperation,
While high-soar'd vengeance was prepar'd to stoop
And tear her feeble quarry, thou hast stept
'Twixt frantic rashness and fierce-kindling rage,
With lenient guile to ward the bending blow!
Such kindness spoke strong passion; and I bless
The fair occasion fortune now affords
To crown thy wishes with my full concurrence.

LYCON.

O my transported soul! Behold, she comes!
 Her looks more mournful than the weeds she wears!
 Lamenting excellence! But, from this hour,
 Be all thy sorrows and misfortunes chang'd
 To scenes of happiness and songs of joy.

SCENE THE FOURTH.

ÆGYSTHUS, LYCON, ÆTHON, and ELECTRA,
 in Mourning.

ÆGYSTHUS.

Come near, Electra. Thou'rt, at length, convinc'd
 The Gods are guardians of the thrones of kings.
 Forever blasted thou behold'st thy hope
 To wrest the sacred scepter from my grasp,
 And, in a torrent of rebellious rage,
 O'erwhelm my fortune, and involve my life.
 But from my soul I pardon what is past:
 And with the ashes of thy lifeless brother
 Would bury all rememb'rance of my wrongs.
 Nay more: to shew how truly I'm thy friend,
 My bounteous heart rejoices to bestow
 The sum of blessings thou'dst have torn from me,
 Peace, safety, greatness, and the joys of love.

Take with this worthy man, whom I esteem,
 All that thy wish would reach. His heart is thine.
 Unite affection in one ardent flame,
 And on his happiness erect thy own.

ELECTRA.

ELECTRA.

To all the wrongs which I so long have suffer'd,
 To all the sorrows that oppress me now,
 Sicken my soul, and sink it to despair,
 Was there this insult wanting, awful Gods!
 To make the measure of my woes complete?

But I'll sustain ev'n this—will welcome all—
 From hope the gath'ring stock may grow so vast,
 That, like an o'ercharg'd building, its own weight
 Will bear it down, a bulg'd and broken ruine.

LYCON.

In pity to thyself—to him whose heart
 Hath suffer'd long in sharpest agonies,
 A wishing, trembling, watching, bleeding—

ELECTRA.

Hence——

Avaunt, presumptuous reptile. Glorious Gods!
 Avenge this vile attempt at profanation.
 The blood deriv'd from your celestial source,
 And stream'd thro' kings and heroes down to me,
 Shall ruffian hopes dishonour?—Know thou tyrant,

[To ÆGYSTHUS.]

That Agamemnon's daughter, first of kings!
 Asserts her high pre-eminence of birth,
 To treat this outrage with the scorn it merits.

ÆGYSTHUS.

Know'st thou not, boaster, all thy pride of soul
 A single breath of mine can blast for ever?—
 Then be advis'd; suppress such arrogance,

Or

Or sure perdition catches thee. Thy brother,
Who seem'd to carry thunder in his name,
Remember, minion, is for ever lost.

ELECTRA.

I know it well—know ev'ry hope is gone;
And loosing them, I also loose my fears.
What has thy pow'r I dare not to contemn?
Thy racks and engines? Bring 'em instant forth:
And thou shalt see, by my heroic suff'ring,
That I am worthy of my father's fame.

ÆGYSTHUS.

Exalted phrenzy!—Be the trial thine—
Nay, Lycon, I were abject to relent—
Nor must thou intercede—

LYCON.

For your renown—
An eagle wreaks no anger on a wren.

ÆGYSTHUS.

I'll crush the scorpion, whose invenom'd spite
Watches to wound and poison my repose.
By all my glories! 'tis her wish, her pride,
To thwart my inclination, mar my hopes,
And jar to discord ev'ry passion in me.
But she shall suffer—

SCENE

SCENE THE FIFTH.

ÆGYSTHUS, ELECTRA, LYCON, ÆTHON and
ARCAS.

ARCAS.

Sov'reign lord of Argos,
Th' ambassador from Phocis is arriv'd,
Who brings the ashes of Orestes.

ÆGYSTHUS.

Hence——

*[To ELECTRA. But on her offering to go out he stops
her, by catching hold of her arm.]*

No, thou domestic fury—thou shalt stay—
I'll riot in thy anguish. To the queen,
Æthon, and tell her I demand her presence.

SCENE THE SIXTH.

ÆGYSTHUS, ELECTRA, LYCON and ARCAS.

ARCAS.

Is it your royal pleasure to receive him?

ÆGYSTHUS.

It is. Be thine the office to conduct them.

SCENE THE SEVENTH.

ÆGYSTHUS, ELECTRA and LYCON.

ÆGYSTHUS.

The smiling minute is at length arriv'd
That crowns my wishes. 'Twill enhance the joy
A breathless rival at my feet must give
To see yon demon made completely wretched.
O I enjoy thy anguish! ev'ry throb
Of that proud heart beats extacy to mine.

F

SCENE

SCENE THE EIGHTH.

ÆGYSTHUS, LYCON, CLYTEMNESTRA, ÆTHON,
NOBLES, ATTENDANTS and GUARDS.

ÆGYSTHUS.

Now, Clytemnestra, let a wife's obedience
Add to the dignity becomes a queen.
Firm thy resolves, and let no treach'rous tear
Or rebel figh disgrace thee. Be thyself.
Be what thou wert when first thou crown'ft my love,
And rule my heart unrival'd.*—Hark! they come.

[* dead march behind.

[ÆGYSTHUS and CLYTEMNESTRA take their seats on the throne,
while ELECTRA and the rest range themselves on one side of the stage.

SCENE THE NINTH.

ÆGYSTHUS, CLYTEMNESTRA, ELECTRA,
ÆTHON, LYCON, NOBLES, ATTENDANTS and GUARDS.

*To them the Funeral Entry, made in the following order, while a dead march is performing
by the whole Orchestra.*

PHOCIAN GUARDS.

GENTLEMEN ATTENDANTS.

THE BANNER.

THE SPEAR.

THE SPURS.

THE GAUNTLETS.

THE SWORD.

THE SHIELD.

THE CORSELET.

THE HELMET, with a Plume.

THE

THE URN, borne by ORESTES and PYLADES.

GENTLEMEN ATTENDANTS.

ARCAS.

MELISANDER.

PHOCIAN GUARDS.

After ARCAS has conducted in MELISANDER, he takes his place among the ARGIAN COURTIERs, while trumpets are sounding a flourish on that side from behind.

MELISANDER.

With royal greetings to the king of Argos,
Our phocian monarch, mighty Strophius, sends
These last remains of Agamemnon's son.
A prince whose mind and person were adorn'd
With ev'ry grace becoming his high birth.
But the great Gods, as if they deem'd our world
Unworthy such perfections, let us see
The promise only, their maturer bloom,
Alas, preventing; for in life's green morn
They wither'd by the blast of blind mischance.

All then a grieving king and people could,
Was piously perform'd. His body burnt
With regal splendors on a fun'ral pile,
Shrunk to those ashes, which we weeping yield
To the last mansion of his great forefathers.

ÆGYSTHUS.

So wish'd a present was the surest means
To gain thy master's greetings welcome here.
But with its cause let enmity be buried.
Orestes is no more: and royal Strophius,

By deeds of worth, may challenge future friendship.

Inform us next of what we wish to learn—

The means and manner of Orestes' death.

MELISANDER.

The monarch we obey ordain'd rewards

To such as should excel in martial skill:

Which kindled ardor in the nobly born

To lift for glory in the gallant strife.

The prince, our darling Pylades, began

The manly exercise, and well perform'd

A foldier's part against his friend Orestes.

Before th' applauding court, alike successful,

On horses long, and long on foot they strove,

The palm still doubtful, and their pleas the same.

At length in chariots, drawn by foaming courfers

That proudly-snorting champ't their burnish'd bitts,

Encount'ring lance to lance, they stoutly stood,

Urg'd their fierce steeds, or with a dext'rous rein

Turn'd them by nice command to all advantage;

'Till, as Orestes aim'd a vig'rous stroke,

The chariot-floor, unfaithful to his tread,

Plung'd him amidst his horses. Starting, they

Flounder'd and tore, and trampled him to earth.

In vain the king and each beholder rush'd,

Eager to save him——instant was his fate.

Struck with the dire mishap, th' assembly wept!

And having bath'd with tears the bleeding corse,

Bore it from off the execrated field.

Place

ÆGYSTHUS.

Place in the royal sepulchre the urn.

And, strangers, take from me a cordial welcome
To share in all the pleasures of my court.

Arcas and Æthon, to your mutual trust
I leave the care of hospitable rites.

Let due attention speak the warmth of friendship
With which I greet again the king of Phocis.

*[The trophies, being delivered by the Phocians to Argians, are carried out
with the urn on one side of the stage, while the court retires on the other.]*

SCENE THE TENTH.

ARCAS, ÆTHON, MELISANDER, ORESTES, PY-
LADES, and the PHOCIAN TRAIN.

ARCAS, *after a considerable pause.*

Forgive us, Phocians, if with hearts less chearful
We pay our portion of a just regard.
Thou, on whose brow the venerable marks
Of age and long experience are imprest,
Wilt pardon us, that sorrow's drops distil
For the sad fate of Agamemnon's heir.
We owe the tribute to his father's worth,
Whose sceptre made us once a happy people.

MELISANDER.

The son no less deserv'd it, had you known him.

ARCAS.

A wish'd-for blessing—but the Gods with-held it.

I had a friend was partner of his flight—
Indulge affection to enquire the lot
Of virtuous Melisander. Does he live?

Did

Did he survive his much-lov'd master's fate?
 My hoary age was nourish'd by the hope
 That I once more should clasp him in these arms,
 And, with him, see a prince restor'd to rule
 Who would have blest my country. But the fates
 Decree these dimning eyes must close forever
 Without that happiness.

MELISANDER.

Thou good old man!
 Sensation's soft'ning, soul-subduing nerve,
 Makes gushing tears outstrip the speed of words
 To tell—thy Melisander stands before thee.
 Twelve anxious years have plough'd my aged form,
 I find, beyond the traces of a friend.
 But seeing thee, my heart at once confess
 It's fellowship, and yearn'd for this embrace.

ARCAS.

Thou Melisander?—gracious Gods!—'tis he!
 O'erpow'ring transport! extacy of joy!
 Which yet one sad rememb'rance sorely checks—
 The cause that I behold thee.

MELISANDER.

I mistook,
 Or thy companion, here, the king call'd Æthon.

ARCAS.

The same.

MELISANDER.

Report has told me of his worth:
 And to my friendship do I thus receive him.

The

The hour you long have wish'd at length's arriv'd.
Here, noble Argians, hail your sov'reign.

ARCAS, *kneeling with Æthion.*

Gods!—

ÆTHION.

All-righteous pow'rs!—we weep the thanks we owe ye.

ORESTES.

Friends to a cause that's worthy of your virtue—

How do ye charm me with such kind regard!

MELISANDER.

Up, up—nor rashly risk suspicious eyes—

We walk upon the verge of ruin—think

A monarch's fortune rests on our precaution.

This stratagem maturely was contriv'd

To gain an unsuspected ent'rance here.

Nor durst we trust to messenger or letter,

And therefore unappriz'd you thus behold us.

This is the phocian prince, whose royal father

Sends fifteen thousand swordsmen to support

Our arduous enterprize. Scarce one day's march

They lag behind. We hasted to prepare

Our trusty friends for arming in our cause—

No tokens more of duty or respect—

They're dangerous. We must be close and speedy.

ARCAS.

With Æthion, singly, let the charge remain

To sooth your present hour; while I away,

Throughout the city, to our trusty friends

These joyful tidings to impart, and plain

The

The means for meeting, where they may express
 Their vows and transports at their monarch's feet.
 I know that ev'ry hand and heart is ready
 To risk the sacrifice of all held precious
 In daring to assert their sov'reign's claim.
 To the safe guardianship of heav'n I leave ye,
 That heav'n whose justice makes our cause its own.

SCENE THE ELEVENTH.

ORESTES, PYLADES, MELISANDER, ÆTHON,
 and the PHOCIAN TRAIN.

MELISANDER.

Thus far, my prince, secure with fortune's gale
 Our prosp'rous pinnace glides. Your eyes have seen
 The spoilers of your father's crown and life :
 Who having reap'd in fields of high renown
 A glorious harvest, brought the purchase home,
 And, in full prospect of enjoyment, plum'd
 Indulgent hope for long successive years.
 But he, who triumph'd o'er the fiercest foes,
 Was in his palace, which his guards surrounded,
 By treason butcher'd : by the wiles and hands
 Of those whom most on earth he had oblig'd,
 A wife he doated on, and trusted friend.
 Nor meant they there to stop. His kingdom's hope,
 Yourself, alike was destin'd, tho' a child.
 But the good Gods, by timely interposing,
 For righteous vengeance rescu'd you from slaughter :
 And

And here their sacred delegate you stand,
 To drive the dreadful bolt. Discharge it then
 With all the dignity becomes a king!
 Be steady, and be just. No wanton rage
 Must be indulg'd. Yet awfully serene,
 Redress your subjects, sister and yourself:
 Punish oppression, root out tyranny,
 Tear usurpation from the throne it stains,
 And doom the shedders of your father's blood.

O R E S T E S.

O Melifander! give my heart a little,
 A little leisure, that I may subdue
 The grief, astonishment and indignation,
 With which 'tis heaving, heavy and oppress'd.

Yes, my great father, royal Agamemnon,
 You shall have signal, shall have full revenge.
 My suff'ring people too shall have redress:
 And thou, Electra——there my bosom bleeds——
 Ye saw, my friends, her speechless agonies!
 Ye saw her piety——ye saw her love.

P Y L A D E S.

To ease that anguish asks your earliest care.
 Occasion must be watch'd for time and place
 To steal upon her in a lonely minute,
 And give her the delight to see you safe.

O R E S T E S.

O Pylades! the wish'd-for hour advances——
 The field of glory opens full before me!

From ease I start, from ev'ry soft'ning joy,
Whose blifs enervates, and whose pleasures cloy.
An active warmth my kindling soul inspires,
And in my bosom rage resistless fires!
Come thou, my friend, and let us jointly raise
One common glory, one immortal praise!
Our brave atchievements, and our social flame,
Together blazon on the rolls of fame.

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT

 ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE THE FIRST.

SCENE *the royal sepulchre, in which is a range of monumental shrines, those of Agamemnon and Orestes standing most conspicuous, adorned with military trophies, and hung with fresh garlands; the pavement before them being strewed with herbs and flowers.*

ELECTRA is discovered, with locks of human hair in one hand, and a golden vessel for sacrificing in the other.

ELECTRA.

THE shrines with garlands hung, the floor around
 Strew'd with the fragrant spoils of blooming spring,
 These tresses, newly shorn, I consecrate——
 And with libations now invoke your ghosts,
 Departed heroes!—whether in the skies,
 Among your kindred Gods, ye take your seats,
 Or dwell with happy shades, where peaceful groves
 Their everlasting breezy-umbrage spread,
 Vouchsafe acceptance of the solemn rites
 A weeping daughter—sister, here performs;
 Who longs to join ye in your blissful state,
 And to our common persecutors leave

G 2

A

A world that virtue learns apace to scorn,
 Where thou, great hero, like the hunted hart,
 Panting and groaning on the crimson'd earth,
 Dy'd by the hands of violence and guilt.
 Where thou, sweet youth, like the fresh-op'ning rose,
 Nipt by the blasting breath of chilly morn,
 Faded a lovely spoil on foreign land.

Nor present was I to perform my part,
 With streaming tears to wash thy stiff'ning limbs,
 Perfume the pile with odorif'rous gums,
 Light with a hallow'd torch the fun'ral fire,
 Collect thy dust, and close it in it's urn.
 Those offices by strangers when perform'd,
 Depriv'd thy dear remains of kindred dues,
 While I with fruitless wishes—fruitless vows—

SCENE THE SECOND.

ELECTRA and ORESTES.

ELECTRA.

Phocian—begone. This mansion, and these rites
 Forbid intrusion.

ORESTES.

Pardon, princely maid,
 Th'unwilling trespass heart-felt anguish prompts—
 The impulse fervent piety obeys.

With rev'rence I approach the awful shrine
 Where royal Agamemnon's ashes rest.
 Orestes—was my friend—so firm a union

Affec-

Affection rivetted, our souls were one.
 He own'd no tie more dear, but that of brother—
 And there fraternal tendernefs——

ELECTRA.

Forbear——

ORESTES.

Electra was his constant theme of talk.
 For her his wishes took unbounded scope,
 His pray'rs were ever ardent. For her wrongs,
 With speechless agonies his heart would heave,
 His sighs would issue, and his tears descend.

ELECTRA.

Stop, stranger, stop—or your relation kills me.

ORESTES.

To her, transported! he would often cry,
 I owe my life!—when sacrilegious hands
 Struck to the earth the author of my being,
 And I, a helpless innocent, was doom'd
 The next to suffer—she was my preserver.
 Inspir'd by tendernefs, she instant seiz'd
 The only means and minute fate would grant
 To save me from the meditated blow.

ELECTRA.

That active zeal since fortune renders fruitless,
 Would he and I had with our father fell.
 What hardships then, what hapless, heavy hours
 Of grief and misery had both escap'd!
 He had not rov'd a wretched, royal beggar,
 Nor I, 'midst daily wrongs, been curst to see

My

My father's fame insulted, and his crown
 The prey, the prize, of those who shed his blood.
 Yet 'gainst such ills did fortitude bear up,
 Sustain'd by treach'rous hope ; whose flatt'ries told,
 That I should live to triumph in my turn :
 Should see my brother with his brandish'd sword
 At once asserting vengeance and his throne.
 But now those hopes desert me ; and I'm left
 The lonely relique of a ruin'd house,
 To suffer wrongs, sustain distressful life,
 And weep misfortunes that admit no cure.

ORESTES.

Infectious anguish — how I catch the weakness !

ELECTRA.

Hah ! tears of pity ! they are gen'rous, kind,
 And soothing to distress so great as mine —
 Who find, alas, no fellowship in sorrow.

ORESTES.

Unfeeling world !

ELECTRA.

But to the winds and skies
 I give, howe'er, my gath'ring anguish vent.
 The clouds, more merciful than monster man,
 Oft melt in mournful drops at my complainings.
 Ah fruitless, vain recourse ! — my father, hear —
 Hear me, Orestes — hear these suppliant cries —
 Assist to soften the relentless fates,
 And gain my soul her rescue from despair.

ORESTES.

ORESTES.

Yet, pious mourner, for your precious peace ——

ELECTRA.

Peace is no more — then wherefore should I live ?

Order is lost — and why exists the world ?

O put a period to it awful Gods !

Since ev'ry bond of social life is broke.

Awake confusion ! Let full rapine rage,

Fierce outrage howl, and desolation triumph !

There's now no crime too horrid to commit ——

Too foul for human practice. Sons may seize

Decrepit fathers by their hoary locks,

And crush the last remains of creeping age !

Relentless mothers from their milky breasts,

With savage hands their smiling infants tear,

And on the flinty pavements dash their brains.

When thrones are violated — when the torch

Of Hymen streams a suffocating flame,

Iniquity hath wing'd its utmost flight.

What can it farther ? Whither must it soar ?

Gods ! do ye ponder till presumptuous mortals

Affault your mansions, ev'n invade your skies,

Ere from your hands the vengeful bolts are hurl'd

That shall to atoms shake this solid earth,

And make laps'd nature, thro' her myriad forms,

Burst with one pang, and in one groan expire ?

ORESTES.

In pity cease ——

ELECTRA.

ELECTRA:

Away, away, away——

Phrenzy's a friend, although a wretched one:

And reason, when distress is past relief,

Our worst of enemies.—A draught of Lethe!—

O for forgetfulness——

ORESTES.

Her mind's disorder'd!

Good heav'n relieve her.

ELECTRA.

'Tis a fruitless pray'r.

I am not frantic—I were blest to be so.

What could I suffer by the loss of reason,

But loss of griefs that reason cannot cure?

ORESTES.

Distressful anguish!

ELECTRA.

Twelve unhappy years

To bear the load of miserable life,

With but one hope to cheer me! and, at last,

My very goal in view—to loose ev'n that—

And yet survive it!—If thou art a friend,

Push me from off this pinnacle of woe,

And aid my plunge to everlasting peace.

ORESTES.

In ev'ry pang that wrings thy throbbing heart—

In all thy wrongs, thy suff'rings, I partake,

With agonies unspeakable—

ELECTRA.

ELECTRA.

49

ELECTRA.

No more.

Hope not with fruitless pity to retard
A soul that's bent on parting—

ORESTES.

Hear me——

ELECTRA.

No——

I'll be no more deluded. Life's a curse
That only foes can wish me to endure.

ORESTES.

Mine is the voice of tenderness—of love——

ELECTRA.

Provoke not desperation!—On the den
Of dragon-wrath thou tread'st!—Retreat in time,
Nor hazard rashness.

ORESTES.

Little do'st thou think,
Electra, what an int'rest thou hast here.

ELECTRA.

Presumptuous youth!—would arrogance—ah! no——
He but compassionates——yet for thy life——

ORESTES.

I live but in the hope to cherish thine.

ELECTRA.

Say'st thou?—The fates are hov'ring on the wing——
The clouds thick congregate — the whirlwind wakes —
The furies gather round!

ORESTES.

My sister——

H

ELECTRA.

ELECTRA.

Hah!—

ORESTES.

What consternation—

ELECTRA.

Said'st thou—said'st thou—

ORESTES.

I'm indeed thy brother—

ELECTRA.

Ever-living Gods!

It cannot be—it is delusion all—

[fainting.]

ORESTES, *catching her in his arms.*

My sister!—my Electra?—Heav'ns! she dies!

O idiot rashness!—my unguarded transports

Have kill'd the innocent I wish'd to succour!

Hah!—breathes she not?—she lifts the lids of light!

And beams warm comfort on my frozen heart!

O'erpow'ring raptures—extacy of bliss!

ELECTRA.

Thou—thou Orestes?—let me view thee well!

Oh! no, I am not—cannot be deceiv'd.

Thro' all thy form—each feature—ev'ry limb—

I trace my father, god-like Agamemnon!

O'erwhelming happiness—how wild thy flow!

ORESTES.

Exalted eloquence of eyes and souls!

O looks that touch beyond the pow'r of words!

Tears are true utt'ers of our genuine joy!

ELECTRA.

Have the good Gods, propitious to my pray'rs,

At

At last restor'd thee?—from the gloomy depths
Of drear despair enlarg'd, my soul now soars
At once to heav'n, and tastes extatic bliss!

How—let me call my wand'ring spirits home—
To ask thee by what providential means
Thou now art present—and from whence the tale
That taught us to lament thy timeless fate?

ORESTES.

'Twas to deceive the ever-watchful tyrant,
And lull within his mind suspicion's guard
While I obtain'd an interview with thee,
And with the friends of Agamemnon's house,
That we might forge such thunders as will blast
This ruthless ravager who stains my throne.

SCENE THE THIRD.

ORESTES, ELECTRA, PYLADES and MELI-
SANDER.

MELISANDER.

Princess of Argos, from your pious hand
This sacred charge your faithful slave receiv'd,
Which now, with joy that words but ill would paint,
He renders back to you and to his country.

ELECTRA.

What, Melifander, are the grateful thanks
That I can pay, to those thou shalt receive!
The tongues of millions will unite to bless thee!
A rescu'd people, with o'erflowing hearts,

H 2

Shall

Shall on their festivals, in choral strains,
 Thy praises blend with those they give the Gods!
 Yes, good old man, thy zeal and steadfast truth,
 If the world's poor in bounties to reward,
 Heav'n, that approves and can, will amply pay.

ORESTES.

My dear Electra, to this more than brother,
 My Pylades, and to his gracious father,
 My life's protector, and my crown's ally,
 How vast our debt of kindness!

PYLADES.

Friendship claims,
 Illust'rous princess, 'mongst more dear regards,
 Some humble portion in the noble heart
 Of Agamemnon's heir.

ELECTRA.

'Tis sure, Orestes,
 The cause must prosper that we see sustain'd
 By such associate virtues!—Gen'rous prince!
 To own the call of royalty distressed,
 And risk thy safety to redress the wrong'd.

SCENE THE FOURTH.

ORESTES, ELECTRA, PYLADES, MELISANDER,
 ARCAS, ÆTHON and a train of ARGIAN NOBLES.

ARCAS, *kneeling with ÆTHON and the argian nobles.*

See, sov'reign lord, your kingdom's richest store,
 The vow'd asserters of your sacred rights!

A

A band of loyal and intrepid nobles,
Who have resolv'd to hazard in your cause,
All that they love, they honour, and they hope.

O R E S T E S.

Rise my good people *—rather let me say, [* *They all rise.*
Friends, brothers, fathers—children!—O my soul!
How strong are thy sensations! Language fails
T' express the transports that I feel within me—
These silent oracles will best reveal them.

P Y L A D E S.

Most happy meeting of a prince and people!

O R E S T E S.

Let Melifander, he who form'd my mind,
Witness how oft my heart hath yearn'd to serve ye.
Nor fear, my subjects, ye shall e'er lament
My mad misuse of pow'r. The thrones of kings,
I want not yet to learn, are only firm
While fix'd on public use and approbation.
Let tyrants strive with rods and racks to bow
To forc'd obedience the reluctant will:
Be it my glory, my delight, to merit
That best of duty which affection prompts.

Æ T H O N.

Such sentiments inspire our raptur'd souls
With glowing gratitude and ardent zeal!
Another monarch, like our Agamemnon,
Comes, as a God, to scatter blessings round him!

A R C A S.

ARCAS.

By the great name of him, whose sceptre sway'd
 The realms of Argos with renown and glory!
 Kneeling * before his awful dust, we vow [* *They kneel.*
 A firm allegiance to his lineal heir.
 Lead us to face your foes—to danger—death!
 No soul shall shrink, no sword shall shame your cause.

ORESTES.

Rise not, my people, ere my willing knee
 Bend with the rest *, and in the face of heav'n, [* *Kneeling.*
 By all its blest inhabitants, I swear
 Firmly to combat till I break your bonds,
 And fix, beyond the will of pow'r to shake,
 The full possession of your natal rights;
 Those rights which none but tyrants e'er invade:

[*They all rise.*

ELECTRA.

The sacred ashes that are there enshrined,
 Must be a party in this solemn league.
 The injur'd have a right, the right of vengeance,
 Which heav'n admits whenever urg'd by justice.
 O then remember, my belov'd Orestes,
 Your murder'd sire. And you, who always found him
 The kind and common parent of ye all,
 Forget not, when your weapons shall assail
 The hearts whose flinty qualities could bear
 To act an outrage of so black a dye,
 To say ye strike for Agamemnon's wrongs.

That

That sound shall make impiety recoil —
 Thro' ev'ry nerve strike terror and dismay —
 Add double venom to the shaft of death,
 And send them shudd'ring to the doom they merit.

O R E S T E S, *kneeling.*

Hear, slaughter'd parent, royal Agamemnon —
 And ev'ry God recognize what I vow! —
 Ne'er shall this arm have respite, till my sword
 Has paid the debt of duty which it owes;
 And so reveng'd thee—that thy awful ghost,
 Which now methinks, with languid looks, I see
 Point at its gorey wounds to fire my rage,
 Shall with a sigh of transport say — 'tis done!
 And sink compos'd to everlasting rest.

[*He rises.*

A R C A S.

Here break we off, lest interruption come,
 The harbinger of danger. What remains,
 Is to determine on the hour and place
 To manifest your person and design.
 The phocian bands, which royal Strophius sends
 For your support, draw near: ere they arrive
 It much imports our enterprize should open.

M E L I S A N D E R.

Goes not Ægyfthus with his num'rous guards
 To the wide plain without the city-gate
 This very hour, to solemnize the sports

With

With which he entertains the populace,
On the suppos'd disaster of their king?

ÆTHON.

He does.

MELISANDER.

The queen — goes she not with him?

ÆTHON.

No.

The tyrant, tho' reluctantly, consents,
At her strong suit, to spare her soul the anguish
A fight like that must give.

MELISANDER.

Th' occasion's good
And we'll embrace it. Those who guard the palace
Will be but few, and easily subdu'd.
Possess'd thereof, we'll instantly proclaim
Our just and loyal purpose. The whole people,
Who venerate the house of Agamemnon,
Will join to seize the city-gates, and bar
The entrance of Ægythus, whose strong guard
The hasten'd phocians sudden will surprize,
Attack, and bravely vanquish.

ORESTES.

Well advis'd.

May heav'n insure a happy execution.

ARCAS.

Princess, 'tis meet that you retire forthwith—
You need no caution for discreet demeanour.

Expect

Expect us soon. Till when, by all safe means,
Promote our good design.

ELECTRA.

Of that be sure.

O my Orestes! that we now must part,
Is to secure a long and happy meeting.

SCENE THE FIFTH.

ORESTES, PYLADES, MELISANDER, ARCAS,
ÆTHON and ARGIAN NOBLES.

MELISANDER.

Princes, that all suspicion be prevented,
Back to the palace speedily repair,
And there let prudence regulate your conduct.
Mean time, myself and all this band of nobles,
Dispers'd throughout the city, will contrive
With numbers to augment our loyal host.
A moment stop—nor want one due precaution.
Remember that the place in which we meet
Is Io's grove, which, on the western side,
The Lycian forum skirts: from thence we'll issue,
Full of our cause, to try the great event—
Nor fear but we accomplish all we wish.

SCENE THE SIXTH.

ORESTES and PYLADES.

ORESTES.

Then does the hour, my Pylades, approach
On which the fortunes of my life depend:

I

That

That circles with a diadem this brow,
Or, with my being, ends my ev'ry hope.

PYLADES.

Doubt not, my friend, the goodness of thy cause
Of ev'ry God will make a champion for thee.
While I—but whither would my frantic tongue?
Down—down inglorious passion, lest Orestes
Disdain to hold me longer in his heart.

ORESTES.

What means my Pylades!—am I thy friend,
And hast thou secrets thou would'st wish to smother?
O give not rude suspicion room to whisper
A want of confidence in him who loves thee.

PYLADES.

Then hear, and wonder! from the very moment
In which I saw thy sister first, I felt
Orestes had a rival in my heart.
Caught by her tears for thy suppos'd disaster,
I gaz'd 'till sympathy so baffled reason,
I almost thought myself the tale was true.
But when I heard her pious plea, to join
Her father's vengeance with the gen'ral justice,
Affection's glow of ardors forceful seiz'd
And sunk my soul insensibly to bondage!
All the big images of war and glory
Shrunk from my mind, and a soft, stealing languor,
A sick'ning apathy subdu'd my spirit.
I fondly wish'd to wear my hours away,

My

My head reclin'd upon her panting bosom;
And, lost to all ambition, only live
The happy object of Electra's love.

ORSTES.

Break from the force of such enfeebling thraldom,
And, prince, assert your dignity of virtue.
Remember you have vow'd with me to brave
All toils and dangers to acquire renown.
Remember we have mark'd a glorious scope
For actions worthy our illust'ous rank!
And shall the roses of a dimpled cheek,
The music of a sweetly-cadenc'd voice,
Impede your progress to immortal fame?

No, to mean souls be narrow schemes confin'd,
A hero's aim should be to serve mankind:
To wishing millions benefits impart,
And thence to reign in ev'ry grateful heart.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

I 2

ACT

 ACT THE FOURTH.

SCENE THE FIRST.

SCENE, *an anti-chamber in the palace.*

ORESTES and PYLADES, meeting.

ORESTES.

MY Pylades! — most happily return'd.
 You went to mark the tyrant's progress — say,
 How did my subjects seem affected with it?

PYLADES.

Sure never triumph wore so sad a face.
 As thro' the city, in imperial pomp,
 Ægythus rode, I mingled with the crowd,
 Observant in their eyes to read their hearts.

The blaze of splendor was august and proud:
 But little satisfaction seem'd to give
 To those for whose delight it was display'd.
 The gay retinue of the pageant king
 Chaunted a solemn pæan — which the people
 Answer'd with deep-fetch'd sighs, and groans of anguish.
 Where-e'er I look'd, each bosom heav'd oppress'd,
 And ev'ry eye was dimn'd with mournful moisture.

ORESTES.

ORESTES.

Blest be the omen! — ev'ry eye be blest
That dropt one tear in pity to Orestes,

PYLADES.

The wary tyrant with his guards gone forth,
The city now is open to surprize —
And I impatient for the glorious struggle
Will lift thee to a throne. But, my Orestes,
The part thou'lt now to act will task thy pow'rs.
I know thy nature gentle, therefore warn thee
To arm thy heart with double resolution,
Lest stealing pity for a guilty mother
Should soften rigour, and defeat thy justice.

ORESTES.

A guilty mother! — My belov'd companion,
From out the palace-windows that command,
In distant prospect, great Apollo's fane,
Send an observing eye, and nicely mark
The motions of our friends. I know not why,
But my imagination's on the rack —
Go, my good Pylades, and bring me word
What you observe is passing.

PYLADES.

I'll away.

But must adjure thee, by thy thirst for glory,
To rouse resentment — harden indignation —
And arm thy soul to combat ev'ry horror.

SCENE

SCENE THE SECOND.

ORESTES, *solus.*

Horror indeed! — A mother! — if she's guilty,
 The Gods, and not a son, must punish her.
 For me to point my sword against the breast
 That gave me infant nourishment — dire thought!
 It shakes my fiercest — firmest purposes.

I saw her sigh — I saw ev'n tears steal from her,
 To hear the fabled story of my death.
 She could not weep without some touch of nature —
 Which not to feel — was not to be a woman.

But what's the feeling of a heart that dar'd
 So dire an outrage on a husband's life?
 Fury re-kindles! — detestation heaves! —
 And tumult and distraction fire my brain!

Watch me, good Gods! in ev'ry start and transport!
 Arrest my arm if phrenzy should provoke,
 And save me from the guilt of matricide.
 Heav'ns! — she is here! — I shudder to behold her.

[He retires backwards.]

SCENE THE THIRD.

ORESTES and CLYTEMNESTRA, musing.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Vain is my search for peace, who bear about
 The cause that makes each place alike uneasy.
 O restless wretchedness of conscious guilt! —

Sure

Sure what we feel's akin to what we fear —

And souls like mine anticipate damnation.

How vain the pomps and glories that surround me!

How insufficient to confer that bliss

The virtuous beggar knows. His scraps are banquets,

And his sleep elysium—compar'd with mine.

My tasteless palate loaths the choicest viands —

My bed's a nest of serpents — and my mind

The cave of terror, anguish and dismay!

Spectres and goblins haunt the dreary scene!

In fancy furies hiss --- fell demons howl ----

And all is horror — agony — despair! —

Where-e'er I look, a husband's mangled form

Rises before me! — and in ev'ry sound

I hear his groans, his cries and exclamations!

ORESTES, *apart.*

She seems disorder'd!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Heard I not a noise! —

Who's there? — The youth on whom my eyes could hang,
I know not why, forever with delight.

He wakes, whenever I see him, the remembrance

That I had once a son — my joy — my pride!

But prov'd a murderer — not a mother to him.

ORESTES, *advancing.*

I'll probe the wound — tho' hopeless of a cure. [*Aside.*]

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Whence, gentle stranger, that thou'rt lonely here

When

When public joys are proclaim'd? Delights
So suited to a gay and youthful mind.

ORESTES.

Mine is but ill-dispos'd to relish pleasures.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Can melancholy taint so young a heart?
Or hast thou from misfortune found a cause
To pine in pensive sadness?

ORESTES.

Oh!—A great one!

The loss of a ^{deserving} long-lov'd friend.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Then thy affliction has a gen'rous plea.
Yet as an evil that we know must come,
The noble mind should be prepar'd to meet it;
Nor suffer sorrow to usurp too highly
For what's inevitable.

ORESTES.

Death, 'tis true,
Is the condition life is granted on—
A debt that all must pay. The parent, lover,
The friend and husband, know the hour will come
Which must divide the best-cemented hearts.
Yet, howe'er common—tho' prepar'd and arm'd,
A real loss will make the firmest feel.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I know it well—know nature will have scope—
And passion mock at reason's wisest precepts.

ORESTES.

ELEGTRA.

65

ORESTES.

We only, who remain behind, are loafers;
For death's to many a relief from care,
To none an evil—if not made by guilt.
Yet where a bright assemblage of all virtues
Blaze early forth, and meet a timeless blast,
Like those which I lament, not only friends,
But all mankind should sadden at the loss.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Who was this wonder?

ORESTES,

The much-injur'd heir
Of glorious Agamemnon! who had sworn,
My soul assenting to the solemn vow,
Never to rest, till to that hero's ghost
He'd sacrific'd the spoiler of his life.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Do'st thou not know me—thou presumptuous boy?

ORESTES.

Well—and must teach you too, to know yourself.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What would'st thou aim at?—To assassinate—

ORESTES.

No, by the Gods!—But if thou art a woman,
The strings of wife and mother I must strike,
And jar them on thy heart. Thy royal lord,
Leader of monarchs, vanquisher of Troy,
The noblest warrior, and the first of kings,
By thy devices, thy accomplice fell.

K

CLYTEM-

ELECTRA.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Hah!——

ORESTES.

Are you stricken?—Seize the only means
 That can redeem your name from infamy,
 Your soul from endless torments. Earth and heav'n
 Demand the punishment of him who dar'd
 To violate all laws, divine and human,
 By an assault on majesty. Each God
 There lost a sacred representative—
 As ev'ry subject did a gracious father:
 But most your son—your unoffending son—
 Blood of your Blood——

CLYTEMNESTRA.

If life be worth thy care——

ORESTES.

Down on thy knees—and to the awful Gods
 Swear with the foe of regicides and traitors,
 To rend this pest of nature from the seat.
 His guilt first gave him, and his crimes have stain'd,
 Or, by the vengeance of a murder'd husband——

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Unhand me, beardless ruffian—nor presume
 Thus to profane my sex and dignity
 With such unlicenc'd outrage—or, this moment,
 The violation of all sacred rights
 Draws ruin irrevocable upon thee.

ORESTES.

Raise boist'rous passion to the height it reach'd

When

When thou decreed'st a king and husband's slaughter !
 Summon the furies, give the damn'd beneath
 An hour of horrid joy ! Bid the winds roar,
 The mountain-billows clash, the earth be shook,
 And set the skies on fire !—Amid'st their wreck,
 Did'st thou, a dreadful deity, preside,
 I'd fearless face thee to arraign such crimes !
 Urge the loud cry of men and Gods for justice—
 Compel the stroke—or punish the refusal.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

To men and Gods—to thee and Agamemnon—
 Orestes—all, I dare avow the deed—
 Exult and glory in it !—Would again,
 Tho' the red bolt were hissing in the hand
 Of heav'n's almighty thund'rer, bravely strike
 For happy freedom from the man who wrong'd me.

O R E S T E S.

The complicated vengeance will have way,
 And thus o'erwhelms thee *——Everlasting Gods !—

[* going to kill her, but stops.

Whither was phrenzy goading desperation ?——
 Gape hell, and save me from a crime so horrid.

[falls on his face.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

But, to thy ruin, indignation prompts
 A surer aim—

[snatching up the sword, and going to kill him.

SCENE THE FOURTH.

ORESTES, CLYTEMNESTRA and ELECTRA.

ELECTRA, seizing CLYTEMNESTRA'S arm.

Assist to save him, heav'n!
 Inhuman mother!—Rise—O rise, Orestes,
 While I have strength to struggle with her fury.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Hah!—

ORESTES, after having raised himself so as to rest on one hand.

Hath amazement seiz'd thee?—From thy hand
 The dreadful instrument of death is fall'n!
 Why do'st thou gaze and tremble?—Has the name
 Of an abandon'd son such magic pow'r,
 That it disarms thy rage?—Take up again
 The deadly weapon—see, my bosom's bar'd—
 Plunge it resolv'd, and finish ev'ry fear.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Art thou Orestes?—Hide me friendly earth—
 Cover me with my guilt—my shame—my terror!

ORESTES, rising.

I am Orestes—am th' unhappy son
 You doom'd, a helpless infant, to destruction,
 And forc'd from sov'reignty to seek relief,
 A miserable beggar, thro' the world.
 But the great Gods, whose wonder-working justice
 No human wiles can circumvent, ordain
 That here I stand their awful delegate,
 To wrest my sceptre from unhallow'd hands,

And

And punish treason, cruelty and murder.

Let rapine, then, and persecution tremble.
The scene of guilty greatness closes here——

And all in view is horror and despair.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Despair and horror have been long familiar,
The inmates and companions of my heart.

Nor know I wish, or will, or hope, or refuge——

Then what I merit let me learn to welcome.

[turns aside, and weeps.

ELECTRA, *apart to ORESTES.*

What hast thou done?—What dangers madly tempted?

ORESTES, *apart to ELECTRA.*

I was to blame: But an unguarded minute
Gave reason's throne to rage.

ELECTRA, *apart to ORESTES.*

'Twas fatal rashness
To hazard so thy safety.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Conscience thus
Abashes the debas'd——I fear to look
On those whom I have wrong'd. The indignation
Which pride discharg'd, recoils with wounding shame——
O matchless torture——misery——my child!

ORESTES.

Nay, if you weep you soften me to woman——
I am not proof 'gainst tears.

CLYTEMNESTRA, *kneeling and they with her.*

Behold, my son,
To what a mother's conscious guilt subjects her!
I bend me at thy feet—and bless the Gods

For

For the protection which their pow'r vouchsaf'd thee,
 I fear'd myself thy murd'ers—and my soul
 Had load enough before to weigh it down,
 Nor needed the accumulative curse
 Of such an apprehension.

ORESTES.

Are those tears
 The genuine tribute of sincere contrition?
 Hast thou parental feelings still!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Indeed
 I ne'er was harden'd quite into a monster—
 Nature adher'd, tho' heav'n had cast me off—
 While conscience with her iron hand wrung drops
 Of blood and water from my heart and eyes.

ELECTRA.

God's! have I liv'd to mingle melting tears
 In such a scene!

ORESTES.

Had sorrow and distress
 Rent ev'ry fibre of our bleeding bosoms,
 So innocence had been our comforter,
 This fellowship in anguish had been bliss
 To what we feel.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

How I have wish'd and pray'd,
 Heav'n's host can witness—without ceasing pray'd
 For their support and comfort to thee.

ORESTES.

Rise,

[they all rise.

And

ELECTRA.

71

And re-compose thy ruffled spirits.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Long——

Too long, by pride, perverseness—folly led,
I doubled torture to conceal my shame,
Masking affliction with a face of smiles——
While in my mind existed such a hell
As only fiends experience.

SCENE THE FIFTH.

ORESTES, CLYTEMNESTRA, ELECTRA and PY-
LADES, with his sword drawn.

PYLADES.

Arm, my friend,
We are betray'd—the city is all strife—
Slaughter and tumult rage in ev'ry street!
Hither contending parties seem to bend
Their furious course—delay not—follow me.

SCENE THE SIXTH

ORESTES, CLYTEMNESTRA and ELECTRA.

ELECTRA.

O my distracting fears!—my brother——

ORESTES.

Gods!

Comes disappointment at my fortune's crisis?

ELECTRA.

Nay, do not linger——

ORESTES.

Will not---

CLYTEM-

ELECTRA.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Go, my children,
And be the Gods your guides to sure escape.

ORESTES.

Will you not with us seek one common safety?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Preserve yourselves—my fortune cannot wrong me—
Nor will I hazard or impede your flight.

ORESTES.

Electra—

ELECTRA.

Say—

ORESTES.

You must not stay behind.

ELECTRA.

I will not.

ORESTES.

Follow near me—

ELECTRA.

On—lead on.

SCENE THE SEVENTH.

CLYTEMNESTRA, *sola*.

Whither shall I—but 'tis no matter whither—
My torments cling too close to be shook off—
And for the rest—'tis all beneath regard.

[Shouting behind.]

Hark!—Whence that clam'rous joy!--Some dire mishap
Befalls my children!--In my bosom sheathe
Your sacrilegious swords, ye sons of slaughter,
But spare the wrong'd—O spare the innocent.

SCENE

SCENE THE EIGHTH.

SCENE, an open place within the city.

MELISANDER, ÆTHON and NOBLES.

ÆTHON.

Confusion! They have gain'd the palace.

MELISANDER.

Then

The prince and all our hopes together perish.

ÆTHON.

'Tis desperation—but we will advance

And force our way—or resolutely fall.

SCENE THE NINTH.

MELISANDER, ÆTHON, NOBLES and ARCAS.

ARCAS.

Lost and undone!—Our numbers, over-match'd,

Shrink back, appall'd!—the princes cannot join us.

MELISANDER.

Great Gods!—how curst a treachery!

ÆTHON.

Behold

The royal Pylades!

SCENE THE TENTH.

MELISANDER, ÆTHON, ARCAS, NOBLES and
PYLADES.

ARCAS.

O welcome, prince—

L

PYLADES.

PYLADES.

On ev'ry side confusion gathers round us!
Our ranks are broken—all is dire dismay!

MELISANDER.

Where did you leave Orestes?

PYLADES.

At th' alarm

I bade him follow—sure he loiter'd not,

For staying but a moment was perdition.

I hardly scap'd the foremost foes, who prest

To join the palace-guards for its defence.

MELISANDER.

Then fear informs me he's forever lost!

ÆTHON.

'Tis but our risking life—

ARCAS.

'Twill be in vain:

They are so strong in numbers, we shall rush

On fruitless slaughter. Let us hope, my brothers,

That he has joined some party of our friends.

ÆTHON.

See! they press on us!

MELISANDER.

'Tis no place of safety.

Nor can we dally—for the God of day

Is near his western goal.—Sound a retreat.

[A retreat sounded behind.]

SCENE

SCENE THE ELEVENTH.

SCENE, *an anti-chamber in the palace.*

ÆGYSTHUS, CLYTEMNESTRA and ATTENDANTS.

ÆGYSTHUS.

The treason was refin'd!—They'd deeply laid
 Their hellish plot—an hour, a minute more
 Had lost my kingdom.—'Twas my faithful Lycon,
 Whose ardent zeal is ever on the watch,
 That gain'd me timely notice.—Clytemnestra!
 What means that downcast and averted look?
 By all my glorious hopes, thou art in league
 With damn'd conspirators against my life.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What can I answer?—Words and vows are fruitless,
 Where rude suspicion takes from innocence
 Its pure and native whiteness. Hast thou foes
 Who are not such to me? Or guilt to answer
 Of which my soul is clear?—What wonder then,
 In scenes like this, if apprehension fills
 My heart with horror, and my eyes with tears.

SCENE THE TWELFTH.

To them LYCON, with ORESTES and ELECTRA,
 guarded.

ÆGYSTHUS, *embracing* LYCON.

My crown and life's preserver!—Welcome, Lycon—
 What tidings of the rebels?

L 2

LYCON.

LYCON.

In confusion,

They have retreated to the sacred grove?

A hold so strong, that all attempts to force it,

Till farther aids are gather'd, might prove fatal.

Pardon the trespass, if their active zeal

Has been too forward, but my soldiers seiz'd

The princess with this youth, as they attempted

Escaping from the palace to the foe.

EGYSTHUS.

Secure 'em both—by heav'n they both shall rue it.

That beardless stripling with his life shall pay

The price of so abhor'd and foul a treason.

And for yon viper, whose invenom'd teeth,

Would tear my vitals, on her head shall drive

The storm directed with such rage at mine.

'Twill joy me to behold her writhing pangs—

Her groans will sound like music's sweetest notes,

Her tears be dropping balm to my repose.

Drag 'em away.

ELECTRA.

I'll not solicit mercy:

For could I stoop to ask it, well I know,

From knowing thee, that I should ask in vain.

The debt of piety I owe a father—

A murder'd father—and the dear regard

An injur'd brother claims, would move compassion

Ev'n in a foe who had humanity,

Did

Did I acknowledge all that you suspect.

But I'm before a judge whose heart is iron;

And whose inveteracy would turn the test

Of spotless innocence against itself.

Be rancour then indulg'd. Sate your revenge

With all the tortures cruelty can frame—

I'll strive to meet them with such fortitude

As courage gives, and dignity demands.

But since my blood must stream, let mine suffice.

This hapless youth, unfriended and unknown,

Whom I persuaded to assist my flight,

Deserves no share of punishment.

ORESTES.

Hear me,

Since I it was who counsell'd her to go.

'Twas I was privy to the plot against you,

And first appriz'd her of it. She was drawn

By fond affection for a long-lost brother,

But to behold him. As a helpless woman,

She could not injure—could not wield a sword,

As I had sworn to do, against your crown.

ELECTRA.

His aim is to deceive you—

ORESTES.

Heed her not—

ELECTRA.

Alas! he raves!

ORESTES.

ORESTES.

No I am calm, and fearless—
Disdaining safety from a woman's peril.

ÆGYSTHUS.

By my best wishes, this distracted struggle
Starts a surmise that's worthy my pursuing.
Such wonderful regard—such flaming zeal
Of each to save the other makes it plain—
He can be—is, no other than Orestes.

ORESTES.

Suspicion will suggest the means for proof—
Nor shall my honour take the stain of falsehood—
Then know me for the rightful monarch here.
I will not stoop from royalty so low
As to solicit, or accept your favour;
But to th' unerring justice of the Gods
Submit my lot—let them determine it.

ÆGYSTHUS.

A mind so haughty in a state so abject,
Fails of its end, not kindling admiration.
An impotence of pride's ally'd to folly,
And, as it merits, ever meets derision.

But your heroic spirits shall be try'd.
Alike your vaunted fortitude exert,
For both shall suffer.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Can I tamely stand,
And see my children doom'd to death before me!

No

No—agonizing nature prompts the plea
Which sure would soften ev'n offended Gods!

O my Ægysthus! if you ever lov'd
Your Clytemnestra, spare her panting bowels,
And wade no farther on in guiltless blood.

[While CLYTEMNESTRA is speaking, ÆGYSTHUS talks with LYCON.]

My soul's already on distraction's verge!

Ah! timely stop the arm of violence—

For so much slaughter have my eyes beheld,

That more must make me mad.

ÆGYSTHUS, *apart to* LYCON.

'Tis wisely urg'd—

Their deaths would worse inflame the factious spirits.

LYCON, *apart to* ÆGYSTHUS.

And should the fortune of your arms give way,

Their persons may secure your terms.

ÆGYSTHUS, *apart to* LYCON.

'Tis true,

And well advis'd. They shall not suffer now—

We'll weigh this matter farther.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Turn, in pity,

And see these streaming eyes—

ÆGYSTHUS.

Detested fight!

Be dumb upon this theme—or, by the Gods!

You share the doom you never shall revoke.

CLYTEMNESTRA, *Rising.*

Be those just Gods as deaf to your petition

In life's last fearful moments.

ÆGYSTHUS.

ÆGYSTHUS.

Say'ft thou!---Trairefs.

Hence, from my fight,

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Would I had been fo ever.

ÆGYSTHUS.

Seize her, and force her instantly away.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Inhuman tyrant!--off--ftand off--I'm calm---

And, tho' infulted, know me for a queen.

My anguish fwells too high for tears or words---

Thou can'ft not frown me dead—I wifh thou could'ft—

Then might I find an end of guilt and sorrow.

O heart too hard for wrongs or griefs to break—

When will thy fuff'rings ceafe?—Diffrefsful fight!—

The innocent and injur'd weep at woes

Too juftly merited by wrongs to them.

Celeftial pow'rs!---protect my helpless children---

They've now no hope of fuccour but from you.

SCENE THE THIRTEENTH.

ÆGYSTHUS, LYCON, ORESTES, ELECTRA and
GUARDS.

ÆGYSTHUS.

Take hence thefe boafers, and in fep'rate dungeons

See them fecur'd from converfe and from light.

ELECTRA.

A lot I've long been exercis'd for bearing.

ORESTES.

ELECTRA.

81

ORESTES.

I was prepar'd; Electra, to die with thee:
But not to live divided.

ELECTRA.

Fear not life.

We shall not long lament each other's absence.

I know the Ruler of our fates too well

To dread that cruel kindness.

ORESTES.

Then we part——

ELECTRA.

Forever!

ORESTES.

Killing thought!

ELECTRA.

Nay do not weep.

ORESTES.

Ne'er 'till this moment did I taste affliction:

For ev'ry ill I've hitherto encounter'd

Was happiness, compar'd with what I feel

In this heart-rending—O malicious fortune!—

Could ruin reach me not without involving

Innocence like thine? A planet so malignant

Rul'd at my hour of birth, that I am destin'd

To murder all who love me.

ELECTRA.

Do not grudge

The satisfaction that my heart receives

In dying with thee—for thee---

ÆGYSTHUS.

Force 'em hence.

M

ORESTES.

ELECTRA.

ORESTES.

Fell ministers---indulge me an embrace---

I ask no more. Electra!---to thy fate

I am constrain'd to yield thee up.

ELECTRA.

This pang;

Tho' not the last, will be by far the sharpest

Our issuing souls can suffer---

ORESTES.

Oh!---Farewel.

ORESTES goes off, guarded; and after him, ELECTRA.

SCENE THE FOURTEENTH.

ÆGYSTHUS and LYCON.

ÆGYSTHUS.

Fortune befriends me still!---I live---I triumph!

While treason grovels in the chains she forg'd

Wherewith to shackle majesty.---My Lycon,

Be thine the disposition of our host.

While night her dark dominion shall maintain,

With caution guard the palace from surprize.

We'll think, ere Phoebus mounts his radiant feat,

Of means to make our victory complete.

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT

 ACT THE FIFTH.

SCENE THE FIRST.

SCENE, *an anti-chamber in the palace.*

ÆGYSTHUS and LYCON, meeting.

LYCON.

Health to the majesty of Argos.

ÆGYSTHUS.

Lycon!

I joy to meet thee. My impatient heart

Has panted for intelligence. The rebels—

LYCON.

Are still entrench'd within the grove—and seem—

ÆGYSTHUS.

What! will they brave me?—With the strength I have

I'll force them thence, or—

LYCON.

Think upon the danger

Of so precipitate an enterprize.

I fear too many of your subjects souls

Abet their trait'rous purpose. To attack 'em,

And to miscarry, will encourage others

Boldly to hurl defiance at your throne.

M 2

You

You must be circumspect—and yet delay
Will wear a face of fear—what to advise—
O for the inspiration of some God!

ÆGYSTHUS.

For that, my Lycon, all this tedious night
My soul has suffer'd on a rack of thought.
Ten thousand apprehensions crowding came,
And strew'd with thorns my pillow—nor approach'd
The God of slumber, with his lenient touch
To seal my aching eye-lids, and relieve
My heart one moment from its galling load.
Successive schemes my wearying mind revolv'd—
But ineffectual all. Nor had the lark
Her early morn'g chaunted to the morn,
Ere I arose—unrested—unresolv'd.
And yet what course—one means we must apply—
And that has difficulties too—'tis—

LYCON.

Death!—

I have consider'd, and the prince must die.

ÆGYSTHUS.

How readily thy genius runs with mine—
Friend to my purpose.—But, my faithful Lycon,
How can the precious business be perform'd?
A public execution might prove fatal—
Yet with concealment 'twill not reach our end.
The mad'ning croud, to blast rebellion's growth,
And root up ranc'rous hope—must know 'tis done.

On

On thee, good Lycon, shall I not rely
To do th' important service?—tell me—

LYCON.

Yes—

Orestes falls your victim.

ÆGYSTHUS.

And Electra.

LYCON.

There must my heart turn rebel and resist.

ÆGYSTHUS.

Nay stop not, half-way down, my stooping vengeance!

The quarry my impatient soul would seize

Is full security. And can I boast,

While that incendiary lives, an hour of safety?

Thou know'st I cannot. Therefore, if thou lov'st me,

Strike with a resolution nobly firm,

And rid my breast at once of ev'ry fear.

LYCON.

A lover's feelings—

ÆGYSTHUS.

Say'st thou?—Foolish Lycon!

See'st thou a spark for hope to kindle from?

Does she not scorn—reject?—And art thou yet

So lost to all conviction, as to doubt

If marble may not with more ease be bent

Than can her stubborn and unpliant will.

Then rouse a manly and becoming spirit.

Let fond desire ferment to furious rage;

Spurn her vile scorn, and trample on her pride—

Force

Force—ravish—I resign her to thy wish—
 So in return, when thou hast sated thine,
 Thy master's passion be appeas'd with blood.

LYCON.

Tremendous impulse!—

ÆGYSTHUS.

Wilt thou?—

LYCON.

'Tis decreed—

She falls at once the victim of my love
 And your revenge. Propose the lucky means,
 And all shall be accomplish'd.

ÆGYSTHUS.

Take this key—

It masters ev'ry lock—and gives thee passport
 Safe, by the secret passage, to their cells.
 Firm well thy heart against her tears and pleadings
 With this rememb'rance—half Mycenæ's wealth
 And my unbounded favour crown the deed.
 Then let not frailty wrong thy int'rest—

LYCON.

No—

Though in the way I met my father's ghost,
 His brow contracted, and his awful form
 Sternly oppos'd, and threat'ning! by his side,
 The shade of my much-honour'd mother kneeling,
 With supplicating looks—and out-stretch'd arms,
 Stopping the scanty avenue before me—

On

On I would go. Should ev'n the yawning earth
Gape and discover all the damn'd in torture,
I'd not shrink back. Then banish ev'ry doubt:
For by the hopes with which you glad my heart,
They both shall perish.

ÆGYSTHUS.

Dear—deserving Lycon!
Let me embrace thee—be resolv'd—be happy.

SCENE THE SECOND.

ÆGYSTHUS, *solus.*

Then I am victor!—Then I reign secure.
Treason shall with her hated objects die,
And my ambition and revenge alike
Be fully crown'd.—Hah! Clytemnestra here!

SCENE THE THIRD.

ÆGYSTHUS and CLYTEMNESTRA.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Tell me, Ægythus, for my boding heart
Flutters and fears, as does the parent-bird
When danger threatens her defenceless young—
Where are my children? I'm not lost enough
To nature, not so much a savage yet,
And harden'd in my guilt, to bear the thought
Of treas'ring woes and multiplying crimes,
By endless wrongs and never-ceasing murders.

ÆGYSTHUS.

ÆGYSTHUS.

After advancing hand in hand so far
In blood and desolation, would'st thou stop,
And risk a reck'ning for our whole account,
Thro' squeamish terror at one added stroke?

No—we have gone too far for a retreat,
And must proceed. The woman who once dar'd
To plot a husband's death, might spare to plead
In the behalf of her rebellious offspring.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

All-seeing Gods!—And dar'st thou, vile deluder,
Accuse me falsely of that damning deed?
The wicked act was thine. In me I feel
'Twas guilt enough—too much, that I was privy—
Prevented not—or pardon'd it when done.

ÆGYSTHUS.

Whose-e'er the crime, we shar'd in happier fruits
As now in dangers from it. Therefore think
What mischiefs menace in thy rash request.
Our happiness, our beings—crowns—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

No matter—
Let us resign them all—submit to beg,
A miserable pair, about the world—
To hazard perils—welcome ev'ry ill,
Want, shame, affliction, punishment—ev'n death!
Rather than hold our scepters and our lives

By

By braving earth and heav'n with endless outrage.

ÆGYSTHUS.

Far be it from me to prescribe your choice,
But mine's to guard the blessings I possess,
Nor shall your rashness put 'em to the hazard.

In what's my life less precious than your childrens?
If one must perish, the great law of nature
Directs th' election. This for myself. If you
Can plead a duty of superiour force
To what you owe a husband—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

That of justice—
The first of those commanded by the Gods!
Yes, justice clamours 'gainst the horrid guilt
Of butch'ring innocents to wear their spoils.

But if, with ruin of your soul and peace,
This idol of a crown must be preserv'd,
Oh! give me up my children—and I'll lead 'em
To rocks and deserts, where, 'mongst prouling tribes,
Some hospitable cave shall yield us shelter—
And there I'll hide 'em—there devote my days
To sorrow and repentance, till I've gain'd
Forgiveness for the wrongs I've done.

ÆGYSTHUS.

Forgiveness?
Forever blasted be the tongue that asks it.
Damnation! Is thy spirit so debas'd,

N

So

So sunk from glorious hope—divine ambition?
How I detest thee!—Hence to howling wilds,
Thy abject wish, and hide thyself forever,

SCENE THE FOURTH.

CLYTEMNESTRA, *sola.*

Barbarian, stay.—He's gone—he's gone to doom 'em!
To bathe his ruthless hands in orphan-blood
And rend the entrails of a wife!—Great Gods!
Arrest the fell assassin's impious arm,
And turn his dagger on the heart that's guilty.

[*Distant shouting behind.*]

Hah!—whence that shout!—my trembling soul alarm'd,
Now shrinks at each intruding apprehension! [Shouting again.]
Another!—and approaching!—let 'em come—
Let gath'ring mischiefs cluster, and involve
The injur'rs with the injur'd.—Pow'rs of mercy!—
However justice deals wth such as me—
Oh! interpose and succour—save my children.

SCENE THE FIFTH.

SCENE, *a dark prison.*ORESTES, *solus, lying at his length.*

What more than midnight darkness!—the keen air,
Sharpen'd with noisome vapours that transpire
From the moist pavement and the clammy walls,
Chills, as it runs, the current of my blood.

Here

Here I can give a scope to mournful musings——
 Can to distraction ruminat—and curse,
 If cursing would avail—my wayward fortune.

[Rises.

Where are the golden hopes that yester sun
 Saw tow'ring to the skies?—My flatt'ring dreams
 Of royalty regain'd——and great revenge?
 All are a grasp of air—a gather'd beam
 From heav'n's resplendent orb!—what I am—nothing.
 Hark!—heard I not a noise?—Surely the voice
 Of soft-complaining sorrow!—'Tis Electra's——
 Unhappy sister!—* Ah! that melting cry!——

[* Shrieking behind.

The ministers of fate are there at work!
 Why, blood-hounds, would ye not begin with me,
 And spare my soul this anguish?—What, another!——

[* Shrieking again.

O agonizing sound!—And where's the aid,
 In this distress, a brother should afford?
 O for a more than mortal force, to break
 These iron-bolted doors and marble walls,
 That I might rush, and rescue her from slaughter.

Hark!—all is hush'd!—the dreadful work's perform'd!
 The lamb of innocence is sacrific'd
 To hell-born tyranny and black revenge.

But see—an op'ning door—a taper's blaze——
 The dawn of death is breaking in upon me!
 Advance fell instruments——immortal Gods!——
 My sister!—my Electra!——

N 2

SCENE

SCENE THE SIXTH.

ORESTES, and ELECTRA, with a lighted torch
one hand and a drawn sword in the other.

ELECTRA.

Take this sword—

[He takes the sword and torch.]

And seize the happy minute for escape.

ORESTES.

Amazement!—Whence this providential turn?

Thy dress is all disorder'd! and thy face

Full of affright and horror!—What has happen'd?

ELECTRA.

I want the breath to give it utterance.—Lycon—

With ruffian violence, assail'd my honour.

At first with soothing vows he sought to conquer—

Till finding they were fruitless—he then menac'd.

But impotent alike in that attempt—

His last essay was force!—I trembled—shriek'd—

And call'd on all the host of heav'n to aid me!

Till in the struggle—sure some pitying God

Inspir'd the thought—I sudden drew his sword,

And plung'd it thro' his heart. He backward sprung

Upon the pavement!—roll'd his ghastly eyes—

Blasphem'd, and curst—till, with a dreadful roar

Of mingled rage and pain, his furious soul

Broke from the quivering flesh!

ORESTES.

ORESTES.

All gracious pow'rs!
The work was yours.

ELECTRA.

I seiz'd that friendly torch,
And found the key that gave him ent'rance. Soon
I try'd it on your cell——for I remark'd
Where they dispos'd you when they brought us hither——
And found, transported, 'twas a passport to you.
O, my Orestes, how I bless the Gods,
That I once more am made their instrument
To save your precious life. But haste we hence,
And thro' yon vaulted mazes---dreary scenes---
Trace out our path to safety.

[A confused noise behind.]

ORESTES.

Hah!---What noise?

ELECTRA.

O my distracting fears! Some new arrest!
Ruin pursues us on too sure a scent.

ORESTES.

The sounds increase! Whatever the event,
We cannot shun it.

ELECTRA.

Grudging destiny!
Was all you could afford this short-liv'd hope?
Alas, my brother, what my arm has done
Will nothing stead thee now. Howe'er, at least

The

The mournful satisfaction it secures,
That we shall die together,

ORESTES,

Here I'll stand
To intercept all danger on its way——
And guard, while I have pow'r to wield a sword,
My dear Electra's life.

ELECTRA:

See! they approach!
Hear you their clashing weapons?

ORESTES,

Keep behind me.
How fearful are the gleams of flashing light,
Which from their tapers, thro' the bending arches,
Stream onward broken glares!

ELECTRA.

Now—now they come!

ORESTES,

Pray be compos'd. Your terrors more depress
A heart that bleeds—astonishment!—my friend?

SCENE THE SEVENTH.

ORESTES, ELECTRA, PYLADES and ATTENDANTS,
with lights,

PYLADES.

O my Orestes!—do my arms entwine thee!——

[Embracing him.

Electra too!—This, this indeed is transport—

[Embracing her.

Pardon the rude expression of my joy!

ORESTES.

O R E S T E S.

Say, Pylades, what miracle redeems us?
 What blest event? For such, my gallant friend,
 Thy eyes discover, ere thy tongue relates it.

P Y L A D E S.

A miracle indeed—and worthy heav'n!
 Your arms prevail—your diadem is won——
 Your enemy in chains——

O R E S T E S.

Benignant Gods!

E L E C T R A.

Proceed.

P Y L A D E S.

When, yester-night, we found Ægysthus
 Was master of your persons, ev'ry mind
 Was fill'd with terror—rous'd to desperation—
 Fearing the spirit of the ruthless tyrant
 Would fate its baneful rancour with your blood,
 And frust'rate all our glorious hopes forever.
 But still resolv'd to rescue or revenge ye,
 Sage Melifander urg'd my secret posting
 With speed to hasten on our phocian succours.
 Eager I fled---and by the guiding light
 Of golden phosphor led 'em with success---
 Aurora saw us at Mycenæ's gates---
 Which having forc'd, we join'd our joyful friends.

Soon as with brandish'd arms and clam'rous shouts
 Our firm, united bands began to move,
 The torrent of allegiance turn'd its course,

And

And pour'd in tides the people to our aid.
 The palace almost instantly furrounded---
 We quickly master'd the usurper's guards,
 And seiz'd his person---where in chains he waits
 The doom your sov'reign justice shall decree.

O R E S T E S.

Transporting tidings!---Haste we to the spot---
 My soul's on fire 'till I've accomplish'd all.

SCENE THE EIGHTH.

SCENE, *an interior court of the palace.*

ÆTHON, NOBLES and OFFICERS.

ÆTHON.

Place trusty centinels at ev'ry door,
 And send out parties to patrol the streets,
 That peace and order may resume their sway.

SCENE THE NINTH.

ÆTHON, NOBLES and MELISANDER.

[Shouting heard from behind.]

ÆTHON.

Whence, Melisander, that tumultuous noise?

MELISANDER.

The loyal transports of the populace,
 On being told Orestes is in safety.

ÆTHON.

Are all the tyrant's instruments of mischief,
 His guards and mercenary creatures seiz'd?

MELISANDER.

MELISANDER.

All are secur'd. The government and city
Are in our hands. So total a revolt
Was wonderful!—and worthy of the people
O'er whom immortal Agamemnon reign'd.

[Striking beard from behind.]

ÆTHON.

Heard you those shrieks?—

MELISANDER.

Almighty pow'rs! defend us
From aught, in such an hour, to mar our triumph.

ÆTHON.

They seem'd to issue from the state-apartments!

MELISANDER.

On minds like ours, from perils scarce recover'd,
The least alarm strikes terror!—This, tho' void
Of grounds for apprehension, makes me tremble.

ÆTHON.

Arcas descends the palace-stairs in haste—
By all the Gods, his visage wears dismay!

SCENE THE TENTH.

ÆTHON, MELISANDER, NOBLES and ARCAS.

MELISANDER.

Some dire disaster!—My much honour'd friend,
Ease our impatient hearts, and instant say,
From whence, and why, those piercing sounds of horror?

O

ARCAS.

ARCAIS.

Unhappy accident!—The minute past,
 Orestes rushing with impetuous rage
 To execute his vengeance on Ægysthus,
 The queen, his mother, interposing, met
 The fury of his arm, and in her breast
 Receiv'd the wound intended for her lord.
 She bleeds to death!—while her distracted offspring
 Dissolve in melting agonies.

MELISANDER.

Great Gods!

Inspire our friendship to relieve their woes.

SCENE THE ELEVENTH.

SCENE, *a magnificent apartment.*

CLYTEMNESTRA is discovered wounded and bleeding
 in a chair. On one side of her, ÆGYSTHUS in chains,
 guarded. On the other, ELECTRA, fainting in the arms
 of her ATTENDANTS. Forwarder on the stage stands
 ORESTES, leaning on the bosom of PYLADES, his naked
 sword lying bloody before him.

ORESTES.

Speak not of comfort to me—there's a fight.
 Must banish it forever from my mind.

PYLADES.

What shall I say to soften sorrow?

ORESTES.

ORESTES.

Nothing.

Oh! I'm a finish'd wretch!—nor hope, nor peace
Can more be mine. Henceforth must ev'ry man,
And ev'ry God, abhor me for this deed.

SCENE THE TWELFTH.

ORESTES, PYLADES, ÆGYSTHUS, CLYTEM-
NESTRA, ELECTRA, MELISANDER, ARCAS,
ÆTHON, NOBLES, ATTENDANTS and GUARDS.

MELISANDER.

My royal lord—

ORESTES.

Too faithful, Melisander,
Behold in what thy gen'rous labours end!
Thy care has been to nurse a parricide!
Pour forth thy execrations—and the world
Will join in cursing the detested hand
That shed a mother's blood.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Forbear, my son,
Nor more accuse thyself. The righteous Gods
Decreed that thou, whom I so much have wrong'd,
Should'st punish my transgressions. In my fall,
I trace the justice of offended heav'n,
And hold thee blameless. Let my dying voice,
Experienc'd long in guilt and its effects,

O 2

Warn

Warn thee, my child, to persevere in virtue;
 For happiness is vainly hop'd without it.
 When innocence is gone, th' unstable mind
 Floats, like a wreck upon the boist'rous waves,
 The sport and prey of each unruly passion—
 Till at life's close—the judgement seat in view—
 How shall I face a murd'ring husband there!
 O think, offenders, on this awful minute—
 For 'twill o'ertake ye all—and ev'ry one
 Must tremble and despair—like—oh!

{Diet.

O R E S T E S.

Electra!—

ELECTRA.

I would speak comfort—but my falt'ring tongue—

O R E S T E S.

I now am past it.—Why d'ye look so gentle?
 Why is not ev'ry arm uprear'd against me?
 Is there no man—no God, will interpose,
 And temper mercy with becoming justice?
 Will all combine to spare—A light'ning's blast!
 A fire consumes—a whirlwind tears my brain!

P Y L A D E S.

Alas, he raves!—Distemper'd reason dies.

O R E S T E S.

All's hush'd!—The raven now forbears to croak
 Her hollow notes—foreboding desolation!
 The matricide may pause!—One fearful minute
 Th' infernal sisters yield—Ah! now they yell!
 They grind their teeth!—they lash me!—Oh! my torture!

A R C A S.

ELECTRA

101

Help—hold him—

ARCAS.

Melting object!

ÆTHON.

Wer't not thou

O R E S T E S.

A damn'd accomplice with me?—Come, and take

Thy portion from the scourge of stern Alecto.

Her serpents hiss!—Oh! from my bosom rend

This fierce promethean eagle, whose fell beak

So mangles my poor heart.

[Sinking into the arms of the attendants.

MELISANDER.

Bear hence the king.

And, pious princess, let your care assist

To comfort and relieve his wounded mind.

ELECTRA.

Be ev'ry God propitious to the task.

SCENE THE THIRTEENTH.

ÆGYSTHUS, MELISANDER, ARCAS, ÆTHON,
NOBLES, ATTENDANTS and GUARDS, with the dead
body of CLYTEMNESTRA.

MELISANDER.

Take hence that tyrant to the fate he merits.

On the same spot where Agamemnon bled

Let him be executed. Then cast forth

His carcass, for a prey to dogs and vultures.

ÆGYSTHUS.

My soul, superiour to your pow'r and malice,

Disdains such puny vengeance. Be my fate

Whate'er it may, ye shall not see me shrink,

But

But face it with a kingly resolution.

Gods if there are, I never fought to please 'em.
 So whatsoever may hereafter prove—
 Why that I'll welcome too. But for mankind,
 Who saw unmov'd the suff'rings of our race,
 I've ever hated—ever fought to plague—
 Shewn them no mercy—and I ask for none—
 But, as a dying legacy, bequeath
 To all, this wish.—May frauds, contentions, rapines,
 Flames, famines, pestilences—slaughters rage!
 And fill, if possible, the world with torments
 Greater than those which I'm prepar'd to suffer.

SCENE THE LAST.

MELISANDER, ARCAS, ÆTHON, NOBLES and
 ATTENDANTS, with the dead body of CLYTEM-
 NESTRA.

MELISANDER.
 Tremendous proof how far habitual crimes
 Can harden human minds! But the just Gods,
 Who partial evils turn to gen'ral good,
 From such examples signify to man,
 That peace by wickedness is surely marr'd,
 And guilt will ever find its fit reward.

END OF THE PLAY.

THE
BIRTH OF HERCULES;
A
M A S Q U E.

Written in Honour of the auspicious BIRTH of
HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE PRINCE OF WALES.

Set to Music by DOCTOR ARNE.

*Hic domus Æneæ cunctis dominabitur oris,
Et nati natorum, & qui nascentur ab illis.*

THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE
SOLICITOR GENERAL

IN THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE
SOLICITOR GENERAL

THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE
SOLICITOR GENERAL

THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE
SOLICITOR GENERAL

T H E

A R G U M E N T.

ANtiquity does not furnish a more illustrious character than that of HERCULES. He was the son of JUPITER, by ALCMENA queen of THEBES, a princess equally celebrated for her chastity and beauty. His whole life was gloriously devoted to the service of mankind, whom he delivered from dangers, rescued from oppressions, and protected from violence. He instructed them in arts, inculcated in them a right sense of moral and social duties, and inspired them with piety towards the Gods. For all which great benefits conferred on the human race, he was deservedly venerated through life, and after death received the honour of deification.

The birth of a law-giver and hero, blest with such talents and distinguished by such divine endowments, is made allusively prophetic of the future merit and fame of a great PRINCE, whose happy birth was, in an extraordinary degree, rendered auspicious by such striking omens as the most fortunate successes and glorious advantages to his country, and such as immediately proved introductive of peace throughout the world; of which greatest of earthly blessings he thereby appeared to be born the royal pledge.

P

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

JUPITER.

MARS.

PHOEBUS.

MERCURY.

CUPID.

VENUS.

MINERVA.

CERES.

CHORUS of DEITIES, &c. &c.

SCENE, OLYMPUS.

THE
BIRTH OF HERCULES.

INTERLUDE THE FIRST.

SCENE THE FIRST.

SCENE, *a rural prospect, with a bower. During this interlude, the stage gradually darkens as at twilight, till a moon rises, and slowly ascends the hemisphere.*

[JUPITER and MINERVA advance from the bower, in which they were discovered seated.

JUPITER.

THE steeds of Phœbus have perform'd their task.
His flaming car has reach'd the western goal!
And day, retiring fast, resigns the skies
To night's more solemn reign.

MINERVA.

Yet on this day
Did Phœbus, the prophetic God, foretel,
That tidings would arrive to glad Olympus,
Of wond'rous import to the world below.

THE BIRTH OF

JUPITER.

Whatever blesses mortals, gives to Jove
 Supreme delight. Thou wilt accord, Minerva,
 In aught benignant to the sons of men.

AIR.

*Who joys excite,
 Partake the glow
 Of each delight
 Which they bestow.
 Grateful in exalted measure,
 Is the pow'r of giving pleasure.*

SCENE THE SECOND.

MINERVA and PHOEBUS.

MINERVA.

Thou, God of day, thy radiant course hast run:
 Yet unfulfill'd thy prophecy remains
 Of joy to high Olympus.

PHOEBUS.

It comes! it comes!—
 From earth it fast ascends!
 Whence blissful mortals, on their blazing altars,
 Steam incens'd clouds to heav'n!

AIR.

*I see with wreaths their temples bound!
 I hear their choral notes resound!*

With

*With measur'd steps they all advance,
And gaily form the sportive dance;
While glowing raptures strongly rise,
That fill the earth, and reach the skies!*

SCENE THE THIRD.
MINERVA and MARS.

MARS.

With ending day, the toils of fight are o'er,
The toils that give me transport!—Say, Minerva,
What pleasures vie with those which are deriv'd
From fierce contention on th' ensanguin'd plain?

MINERVA.

Such as arise from arts which bless mankind.
By reason's laws I seek to guide the war,
And not ferocious impulse. Still more blest,
Beneath the peaceful olive's happier influence,
To cultivate sublime and useful skill,
With milder, better, more refin'd delight.

AIR.

*Wisdom 'tis to shun dissention,
What but madness makes contention?
Where the best that can befall,
Is alike to suffer all.*

*Truer joys must sure attend
Arts which mortals most befriend.
Such 'tis kindness to impart,
Such reveal a bounteous heart.*

SCENE

THE BIRTH OF

SCENE THE FOURTH.

MARS, VENUS, CERES, CUPID, and VENUS's Train
of Loves and Hours.

CERES.

Still, God of battles, still must we behold,
Wide o'er the earth, the wastes of war extend;
When will the rage of desolation cease?
When shall to peaceful arts mankind return,
And till that soil for plenty, now made rich
With streams of human gore?

A I R.

Ab! let contention cease,

By restoring

Realms deploring

To the grateful calms of peace.

Then shall swords, to plough-shares turning,

Make my gifts abundant rise,

While glad hearts, with fervors burning,

Waft their thanks to bounteous skies.

MARS.

Their rights of rule all deities assert;
And war's alike my province and delight.

A I R.

The dreadful alarms,

The clangor of arms,

The trumpets, loud-sounding,

The clarions, resounding,

With ardors inspire me,

To ecstasies fire me,

Ev'n groans and loud cries have their charms.

VENUS.

HERCULES.

111

VENUS.

Cruel Mars! how fatal is thy sway!
Domestic bliss,
The sweets of Hymen, and the joys of love,
Are blasted all by thee.

AIR.

*Warm desires,
Pleasing fires,
In gentle breasts that glow,
With cries to arms,
With war's alarms,
Are chang'd to throbs of woe.
Sever'd lovers, sighing, pining,
Sweet and tender hopes resigning,
Kind relief from me implore.
Then, in pity to that anguish,
Felt by fond-ones when they languish,
Grant my suit, and peace restore.*

MARS.

'Tis human guilt involves the human race
In all the various woes deriv'd from war.
I, who delight in horror and in havock,
Am guiltless of their causes.

TRIO.

CERES. *We still implore —*

MARS. *No more—no more—*

VENUS. *Afflicted nations pitying see—*

CERES. *Bid wounded bosoms cease to sigh—*

VENUS. *Wipe sorrow's drops from beauty's eye—*

MARS. *What—what are human woes to me?*

VENUS

THE BIRTH OF

VENUS. *Gods and mortals sure must move—*

MARS. *I impel no fatal ire—*

CERES. *Pleading goodness—*

VENUS. *Pleading love—*

CERES.

VENUS.

MARS.

In Mars

In Men

Should 'suage this martial fire.

SCENE THE FIFTH.

CUPID, and the Train of Loves and Hours.

CUPID.

The Goddess hastens to the court of Jove!

Then is this hour your own—an hour and scene

To dalliance suited, and the sports of love.

AIR.

Where soft breezes odours breathe,

Round the trees where woodbines wreath,

Here, at ev'ning's silent hours,

Daïsied banks and myrtle bow'rs,

Darkling shades,

Moon-light glades,

All inviting,

All delighting—

Warbling where, upon the spray,

Philomela tunes her lay,

While fond turtles bill and coo,

Here should lovers kifs and woo.

[CUPID goes out, and the Loves and Hours dance.]

END OF THE FIRST INTERLUDE.

INTERLUDE THE SECOND.

SCENE THE FIRST.

SCENE, *a magnificent hall.*

JUPITER, MARS, PHOEBUS, CUPID, MINERVA,
VENUS, CERES, and other DEITIES, with many
of their celestial ATTENDANTS.

While JUPITER advances from the farther part of the stage, the following chorus is sung by the rest of the DEITIES and PERSONAGES

CHORUS.

*May concord, glory, joy and love,
Forever fill the court of Jove.*

SCENE THE SECOND.

To them MERCURY.

MERCURY.

Hail, God supreme! and all Olympian pow'rs!
May never hour pass off with less delight
Than that my welcome tidings must create.

JUPITER.

Say, Hermes, what new transports shall we feel?

MERCURY.

The chaste Alcmena to immortal Jove
Has borne a son — the infant Hercules —
In happy season of propitious Omens.

AIR.

*All foretel his future worth,
Plenty, glory, grace his birth!*

Q

Fame

THE BIRTH OF

*Fame exciting loud applause,
 Victory crowning virtue's cause!
 These his natal hour emblaze!
 These our hopes to transports raise!*

MARS.

Prognostics all that he will shine in arms,
 A spoiler great, and vanquisher by war.

PHOEBUS.

Not such by my divining spirit seen——
 He comes to ravag'd realms and hostile pow'rs
 The welcome harbinger of smiling peace;
 To hush contention, harmonize the world,
 Drive hated discord to her native hell,
 And once again restore Astræa's reign.

AIR.

*Happy birth, which shall bestow
 All was hop'd for from above,
 All that mortals wish below,
 Safety, plenty, joy and love.
 Slaughter shall desert the plain,
 Peaceful arts resume their sway,
 Commerce o'er the sea shall reign,
 Science beam her heav'nly ray:
 While Muses in their vocal grove,
 Shall greet with songs the son of Jove!*

[JUPITER and PHOEBUS retire towards the back part
 of the scene, and confer apart.

CERES.

HERCULES.

115

CERES.

The heav'nly pow'rs, whose bounties bless mankind,
Delight in peace. To their benign desires
This birth will prove auspicious. Ceres wishes
Felicity to those her sway protects.

A I R.

*May ev'ry hind who treads the dale,
With heart-felt glee in cot regale;
And who from hills the prospect eyes,
See golden harvests round him rise.
May toil, reliev'd by harmless play,
Wear willing down each welcome day;
While peace and hope together cheer,
And plenty crowns the happy year.*

M A R S.

Since born for earthly good, let gracious pow'rs
Endow with heav'nly gifts the son of Jove.

Imperfect virtues in the world beneath
Make valour needful, to restrain ambition,
Justice uphold, and break oppression's bonds:
Then that do I bestow.

A I R.

*When wrongs provoke, his dreadful ire
Shall tinge with blood
The rolling flood,
And fill the fields with martial fire!*

Q 2

Or

Or when injustice spreads alarms,
 When faith and honour urge his arms
 The injur'd cause to right,
 Far as the Poles shall speed his aid,
 By toils and climates undisarm'd,
 Resistless in its might,

CURIO.

Yet matchless as his prowess may be made,
 As Mars from sure experience must confess,
 There is a pow'r no valour can withstand.

A I R.

On hostile plains the stoutest heart
 Which e'er won laurel prize,
 Must sink the victim of the dart
 That's shot from beauteous eyes.
 However great, renown'd in arms,
 The victor of the field,
 If once assail'd by female charms,
 He'll glory then to yield.

MINERVA.

My gifts are of the choicest: such as most
 Contribute to the happiness and worth
 Of those allotted to the mortal state.

A I R.

What will always honour find,
 I with gladness now impart;

Wisdom

Wisdom to exalt the mind,

Virtue to adorn the heart.

These abundant I bestow,

These shall young Alcides grace,

Born to succour worth below,

Born to bless the human race.

VENUS.

To gifts so precious, what can Venus add,

But, to reward the worth they shall produce

That best of blessings, sweet, endearing love?

Love, which inspires the noblest souls to do

The noblest deeds, and pays them with its joys.

AIR.

Be his blessing,

E'er possessing

What the wise and good regard ;

Hopes delighting,

Charms inviting,

These are valour's best reward.

JUPITER and PHOEBUS advance towards the front of
the stage.

RECITATIVE *accompanied.*

JUPITER.

What you fortel, prophetic God, is joyful !

O Phoebus ! shall my young Alcides add

New glories to his race ?

PHOEBUS.

P H O E B U S.

A life devoted to the cause of virtue,
 In humbling tyrants, in relieving states.
 From fell oppression, in peopling regions,
 In teaching men those arts which most conduce
 To human welfare, worth and happiness,
 Shall make him fam'd and honour'd while on earth,
 And at his death exalt him to the skies.

J U P I T E R.

O sweet indulgence of parental hope,
 That in the objects of our tend'rest love
 We rear up public blessings! So, in thought,
 Anticipate what millions may acquire
 Of true felicity from us deriv'd.

A I R.

*Charming sympathies of nature,
 Where we mark the kindred feature!
 Charming bodings, when we trace
 The budding virtues of a race!
 Sweet sensations, grateful views,
 Where the parent life renews!
 Where he makes a second claim
 To being, merit, bliss, and fame!*

P H O E B U S.

The infant hero nobly is endow'd
 By high Olympian pow'rs; with joyful hearts,

While

While mortals hail the blessings that attend him,
And which his worth will constantly diffuse.

VENUS.

Then, Phoebus, shall thy reign with mine unite.

DUETTO.

PHOEBUS. *Arts shall refine—*

VENUS. *Beauty shall shine—*

BOTH. *Strong ardors exciting in all!*

PHOEBUS. *As genius may fire—*

VENUS. *As love may inspire—*

BOTH. *Each mortal shall own the fair call.*

*The DEITIES and their ATTENDANTS retiring to the back part of the stage,
a grand dance is performed by the following personified VIRTUES and
BLESSINGS.*

INDUSTRY,	} AND {	HEALTH,
TEMPERANCE,		MIRTH,
HONOUR,		LIBERTY,
VALOUR,		PEACE.

*As the last and principal couple, VALOUR leads PEACE on the stage, and there
crowns her with a wreath of olive.*

GRAND CHORUS.

*Earthly mortals, Gods above,
Greet with joy the son of Jove,
Born to glow with virtue's flame,
Born to raise a deathless name.*

END OF THE MASQUE.